

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

**SCHOOL COUNCILS
THE REALITY AND THE DREAM**

BY

EVAN MILLER



**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION**

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

**EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING 1995**



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

THE AUTHOR HAS GRANTED AN
IRREVOCABLE NON-EXCLUSIVE
LICENCE ALLOWING THE NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF CANADA TO
REPRODUCE, LOAN, DISTRIBUTE OR
SELL COPIES OF HIS/HER THESIS BY
ANY MEANS AND IN ANY FORM OR
FORMAT, MAKING THIS THESIS
AVAILABLE TO INTERESTED
PERSONS.

L'AUTEUR A ACCORDE UNE LICENCE
IRREVOCABLE ET NON EXCLUSIVE
PERMETTANT A LA BIBLIOTHEQUE
NATIONALE DU CANADA DE
REPRODUIRE, PRETER, DISTRIBUER
OU VENDRE DES COPIES DE SA
THESE DE QUELQUE MANIERE ET
SOUS QUELQUE FORME QUE CE SOIT
POUR METTRE DES EXEMPLAIRES DE
CETTE THESE A LA DISPOSITION DES
PERSONNE INTERESSEES.

THE AUTHOR RETAINS OWNERSHIP
OF THE COPYRIGHT IN HIS/HER
THESIS. NEITHER THE THESIS NOR
SUBSTANTIAL EXTRACTS FROM IT
MAY BE PRINTED OR OTHERWISE
REPRODUCED WITHOUT HIS/HER
PERMISSION.

L'AUTEUR CONSERVE LA PROPRIETE
DU DROIT D'AUTEUR QUI PROTEGE
SA THESE. NI LA THESE NI DES
EXTRAITS SUBSTANTIELS DE CELLE-
CI NE DOIVENT ETRE IMPRIMES OU
AUTREMENT REPRODUITS SANS SON
AUTORISATION.

ISBN 0-612-01553-X

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR:

EVAN MILLER

TITLE OF THESIS:

SCHOOL COUNCILS: THE DREAM AND
THE REALITY

DEGREE:

MASTER OF EDUCATION

YEAR DEGREE GRANTED:

1995

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Evan Miller

(Student's signature)

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

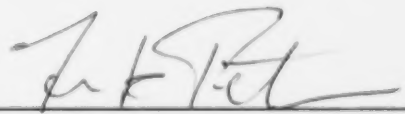
Cardiff Echoes, 9 Prospect Pl.
Morinville, Alberta. T8R 1N7

Date April 18, 1995

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

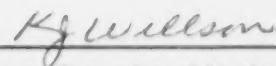
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **SCHOOL COUNCILS: THE REALITY AND THE DREAM** submitted by **EVAN MILLER** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **MASTER OF EDUCATION**, in Educational Administration.



Dr. F. Peters, Supervisor



Dr. J. da Costa, Committee Member



Dr. K. Willson, Committee Member

Date April 13, 1995

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe both the present roles of school councils in Sturgeon School Division #24 and their potential roles for the future. To accomplish this a qualitative study was done using the purposive sampling technique to select ten candidates. The candidates consisted of five school council members and five Sturgeon principals. Data was collected by reviewing Sturgeon's Policy and interviewing the candidates. All candidates were interviewed using the same interview questions and their responses were compiled, compared, contrasted, and analyzed for emerging themes.

When the themes were analyzed, four seemed to stand out from the others. These were: (a) the importance of communication, (b) the need for school councils to have a meaningful role, (c) the need for local input when determining roles for school councils, and (d) school councils are essential to schools. Other themes included the "human factor" and some concerns that arose.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	1
Setting the Stage	1
Introduction	1
Research Problem Data	2
Research Problem	2
Sub-problems	2
Present school councils	2
Perceptions about future school councils	3
Background Information	4
History of Parental Involvement	4
Government Initiatives Since the 1988 School Act	5
Achieving the vision reports	5
Study on the impact of section 17 of the 1988 school act	6
The roundtable discussions	6
The task force on roles and responsibilities	6
Description of Terms	7
Limitations and Delimitations	8
Limitations	8

Delimitations	8
Significance of This Study	8
CHAPTER 2	11
Literature Review	11
Parental Involvement	11
Summary	13
Related Research	13
Department of Education Survey	14
Jonson Project	15
Site-based Management	16
Setting the Parameters	16
Problems to be Considered	17
Potential Benefits of Site-Based Management	19
Summary	23
School Councils in Other Countries	24
School Councils in Australia	25
History	25
School Councils in Victoria	26
Membership	27
Roles and Responsibilities	27
Principals and School Councils	28
Evaluation of the Move to School Councils	29

School Councils in Chicago	31
Conditions That Led to School Reform . .	32
Uniqueness of the Chicago School Reform .	32
The Reform Act	33
How the Reform Act is Different . .	33
Features of the Reform Act	34
Goals of the Reform Act	35
Division of Authority	36
Powers Given to the LSCs	36
Principal's Authority Under the	
Reform Act	36
Powers Given to the Central Board of	
Education	37
Effects To Date of the Reform	39
A Preliminary Look at the Effects of	
the Reform	39
The Principals' Perspective	41
Types of Councils That Have	
Evolved	42
Evaluation of the Chicago Reform	44
Summary	45
 CHAPTER 3	 47
 Research Method and Design	 47
Introduction	47

Type of Study	47
Sampling	48
Data Collection Procedures	48
Analysis of Data	50
Validity	51
 CHAPTER 4	 52
 Presentation of Data	 52
Introduction	52
Background Information	52
Governing Policy	52
Mechanics of School Councils in	
Sturgeon	53
Composition of present	
councils	53
Frequency of meetings	54
School Council Members Interview Data	55
Present School Councils	55
Present Roles of School Councils	55
Problems Encountered	56
Limiting and Enabling Factors	57
Limiting factors	57
Enabling Factors	58
Benefits Presently Derived From	
School Councils	58

Perceptions on the Future of School

Councils	60
Roles For School Councils	60
Composition	62
Problems and Concerns	63
Conditions That Need to Exist	64
Skills Which School Council Members Should Possess	65
Perceived Benefits	66
Who Should Set the Roles for School Councils	67
The Administrators' Point of View	68
Present School Councils in Sturgeon	68
Present Roles of School Councils . .	69
Problems Encountered	70
Enabling and Limiting Factors	71
Enabling factors	71
Limiting factors	72
Benefits Derived From School Councils	72
Principals' Perceptions on Future School	
Councils	75
Future Roles for School Councils . .	75
Composition	76
Problems and Concerns	76
Conditions That Need to Exist	78

Important Skills	80
Perceived Benefits	81
Who Should Determine the Role of School Councils	82
 CHAPTER 5	 84
Analysis of The Data	84
Introduction	84
Present School Councils	84
Present Roles of School Councils . .	84
Problems Encountered	85
Enabling and Limiting Factors . . .	86
Enabling factors	86
Limiting factors	87
Benefits Obtained From Present School Councils	88
Perceptions on the Future of School Councils .	89
Perceived Roles for School Councils	90
Composition	91
Problems and Concerns	92
Conditions That Need to Exist . . .	93
Skills That Would Benefit School Council Members	95

Perceived Benefits of Future School	
Councils	95
Who Should Determine the Role of	
School Councils	97
Implications of the Literature For This	
Study	98
Introduction	98
Roles For School Councils	98
Parental Participation	99
Communication	99
Ownership	100
Mandate of School Councils	101
Support For School Councils	101
Role of the Principal	102
 CHAPTER 6	 103
Themes, Implications and Recommendations	103
Themes	103
Introduction	103
Communication	104
A Meaningful Role	106
Who Should Set The Roles For the	
School Councils	107
Why School Councils Are Necessary	107
The Critical Factor	109

Concerns	110
Recommendations	112
Phase I	113
Phase II	114
Phase III	115
Summary	115
References	117
Appendix A	123
Appendix B	125
Appendix C	128

CHAPTER I

Setting the Stage

Introduction

The role of parents and other laymen in the governance of public education has been an issue of importance during the past and lately it has come to the forefront, both here in Alberta and in various other parts of the world. To deal with this issue some countries, states or provinces, and cities have established school councils made up of parents, community members, administrators, staff, and students. The roles and responsibilities of these councils and the degree to which they have authority over local schools varies greatly. The Alberta government has given strong indications of the desire to make changes in the governance structures for education here in the province. These changes could have a significant impact on education in Alberta for years to come.

In this study I studied school councils in one Alberta jurisdiction, Sturgeon School Division #24. This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter one will introduce the study and set parameters for it by: (a) setting out the research problem and sub-problems, (b) giving some background information on parental input in Alberta and government initiatives in this area, (c) giving definitions for terms used, (d) limiting and delimiting the topic, and (e) explaining the significance of the study. An extensive review of the related literature on parental involvement in education, site-based management, school councils in Victoria, Australia and the Chicago School Reform will be included in chapter two. Chapter three describes the research design used for this study, including data collection and methods of analyzing the data. In the

fourth chapter, the findings of the study are expounded. The fifth chapter answers the research questions by comparing and contrasting the data collected from the two different groups, the school council members and the principals. This is followed by a section looking at the implications of the literature for the findings of this study. Chapter six presents the major themes that arose from this data, and discusses implications and recommendations resulting from this study.

Research Problem Data

Research Problem

In this thesis, the problem addressed was "To describe both the present roles of school councils in Sturgeon School Division #24 and their potential roles for the future." This was studied from the perspective of school council members and system principals.

Sub-problems

The main problem for this study raises many sub-questions which need to be answered. These questions fall into two main categories, present school councils and perceptions about future school councils.

Present school councils. The questions that arose with respect to present school councils are as follows:

1. What functions do school councils currently serve?
2. Were there problems encountered in the formation of current school councils, and if so how were they resolved?
3. Were there problems encountered in the operation of the school councils, and if so how were they resolved?

4. What factors either enabled or limited the effectiveness of these school councils?
5. What resources were available to help school councils be as effective as possible?
6. What were the benefits of having school councils operate to the: (a) students, (b) school board, (c) parents, (d) community, (e) school staff, and (f) the administration?
7. What is the composition of the present school councils?

Perceptions about future school councils.

Questions regarding the perceptions of future school councils that need to be addressed include:

1. What is perceived to be the future role for school councils?
2. What conditions must exist for school councils to be able to fulfil the role perceived for them?
3. What are potential problem areas that could arise if school councils play the role perceived for them?
4. What are the perceived benefits of school councils to the: (a) students, (b) schools, (c) parents, (d) community, (e) school staff, and (f) administrators?
5. What skills are important for a person to possess to be an effective school council member?
6. What resources need to be made available to school councils to enable them to play an effective role?
7. What should the composition of school councils be?

8. Are there any concerns about the possible future roles that school councils may fulfil?
9. Who should have a say in setting the roles for school councils?

Background Information

There are two important areas to consider while looking at the background information for this study. The first area deals with the history of the involvement of laymen in the educational decision-making process in Alberta. The second deals with the initiatives taken by the Alberta Government in this area since the 1988 School Act which formalized school councils in Alberta.

History of Parental Involvement

The history of the involvement of laymen in the educational decision-making process in Alberta is an area which needs to be considered. When Alberta joined confederation in 1905, the "Alberta Act" adopted the 1901 Ordinances of the Northwest Territories (Bezeau, 1989) which allowed people the right to establish four by four school districts (Legislative Assembly of the Territories, 1901). In this way the province passed many decision making powers on to the local people through the school boards which ran their schools. Soon these boards amalgamated into larger districts that had more than one school to run and the decision making process moved a step farther away from the local parents. This trend continued as the province grew. Soon school boards were running more and more schools and the decision making process became even further removed from local parents and the local community. Their input was limited to either indirect input through voting for school board members or informal input through Parent-Teacher Associations (Ordinances, 1901, Legislative Assembly, 1922,

1931, 1952, 1980). Then in the School Act of 1988 an avenue for direct and formal input into the educational decision-making process was made available to parents and community members. School councils could be formed under section 17 and their input into the educational decision-making process was set at the discretion of the local school board (Legislative Assembly, 1988). Under this section of the school act parents had the right to form school councils, advise the school board and principal on school related matters or perform duties delegated to them by the school board.

Government Initiatives Since the 1988 School Act

While section 17 of the School Act of 1988 did lead to the establishment of more school councils, it did not appear to change the level of input that parents and community members had regarding the decision-making process at the local level (Alberta Education, 1991). Since the passing of the 1988 School Act, there have been four main government initiatives related to parental or community involvement in this area. These have been: (a) the Achieving the Vision Reports, (b) a Department of Education study on the impact of section #17 of the 1988 School Act, (c) the roundtable discussions held in the fall of 1993, and (d) the task force examining the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, school boards, school councils and the community which occurred in May, June and July of 1994.

Achieving the vision reports. The first of these, the "Achieving the Vision Reports" established a "report card" on the performance of education in the province. The report, by measuring certain criteria, indicated the importance which the Alberta Government places on these areas. One of the main areas addressed dealt with the level of satisfaction regarding the amount of input which parents

and the community have had into school activities and decisions (Alberta Education, 1993a).

Study on the impact of section 17 of the 1988 school act. The next government initiative was in the form of a survey done in 1991 entitled "A Study on the Impact of the School Council Section of the 1988 School Act." It showed that while this section did lead to the establishment of some new councils, it did not cause significant changes in the level of parental and community input into the decision-making process. The report indicates that school boards were reluctant to delegate decision-making powers to school councils (Alberta Education, 1991).

The roundtable discussions. The third government initiative in this area came in the fall of 1994. The workbook distributed for the roundtable workshops outlined, for discussion, some possible changes to the powers granted to school councils. These changes would have strengthened parental and community "say" in the governing of local schools. The changes listed for discussion were in the area of evaluation of school programs, budgeting, policy making, school rules, special education, and the provision of other educational services (Alberta Education, 1993b).

The task force on roles and responsibilities. The final initiative was the task force which collected input on the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in education. It gathered data on the roles and responsibilities of parents, students, school boards, principals, school councils etc. This task force met with a total of approximately 600 people in Grande Prairie, Stony Plain, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, and Medicine Hat. In each of these meetings the group was divided into 10 smaller groups and each group was asked for input on the roles and

responsibilities for some of the stakeholders in education in Alberta (Alberta Education, 1994).

Description of Terms

The following list provides operational definitions for terms which are central to this study:

"Four by four school districts" refers to the original school districts set up in the province of Alberta. Due to problems with transportation, these were limited in size to areas no larger than four miles by four miles.

"Parent-Teacher Associations" were groups which were formed to facilitate communications between teachers and parents and also to garner support for school policies and activities.

"School Councils" are groups which can include parents, community members, staff, students, and administrators. They play various roles in the decision-making process their local school depending on their individual circumstances.

"Site-based management" refers to a collaborative management technique in which various aspects of decision-making responsibilities and authority have been decentralized to the school level. These can include budgeting, purchasing of supplies and equipment, school policies and procedures, school programs, personnel and maintenance.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

The data collection of this research were limited by the respondents willingness to be candid as this research was limited to Sturgeon School Division principals and council members. However, I overcame this to a certain extent by discussing my intentions clearly with all groups involved and using the ties which I have built in Sturgeon to convince the respondents of my sincerity.

Another area that placed some limitations on the data which were collected was my inexperience as an interviewer and a researcher. This problem also included the influences exerted by my biases on the data which I collected. Steps taken to address these problems are described in the method section of the thesis.

Delimitations

To make this research manageable the following steps were taken. First, respondents for the study were limited to principals and council members from Sturgeon School Division. The second delimitation was the limiting of the in depth interviews to ten (five from each group).

Significance of This Study

Parent and community involvement in the governance of education seem to be on the increase. The Alberta Government has taken initiatives in this area with section 17 of the 1988 School Act and the subsequent study on the impact of this clause. While this gave some information on the roles of school councils and some of the problems they faced, there were other crucial areas left untouched. This study will expand this base of information in some of these areas. School council members' perceptions as to what the

role of school councils should be, factors that enabled school councils, resources needed for school councils to operate effectively and skills that school council members need will be areas in which the previous bank of knowledge will be added to.

The literature on school councils comes from various parts of the world and addresses how they operate, as well as their successes and shortcomings. There is not, however, the same type of information available on school councils operating in Alberta context. This sort of information is crucial if informed decisions benefitting education in Alberta are to be made concerning school councils. This study will also add to the data available on school councils in the area of: (a) benefits and drawbacks associated with their existence and (b) factors that enabled or limited their effectiveness.

The last two contributions that this study makes involves the uniqueness of the individual school councils in Alberta and the need for this to be a well planned change if success is to be obtained with a minimum of disruption and controversy. To start with, this study will highlight the different needs among schools with regards to the level of parent and community input desired into the decision-making process. What works in one community may not come close to meeting the needs of another. This study should help to provide a sense of awareness as to the scope of the diversity of feelings regarding the roles which are desirable for school councils. Secondly, both the literature review and the findings suggest that while school councils can be a benefit to education, there are many factors to consider and problems to overcome in their implementation. If a careful plan is devised to review and, if necessary, change the roles that school councils play, the negative effects can be minimized and the positive effects maximized. The more that is known about school

councils, the better the chance of making the experience a beneficial one when they become an integral part of the educational decision-making process in Alberta.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

There are some related areas that should be looked at when considering the topic of school councils. First there is a need to look at the involvement of parents and other laymen generally in education. The pros and cons of this should be weighed to ensure that this is a beneficial practice. The second related area that needs to be reviewed is site-based management as this seems to be the predominant management style used when working with school councils. Third an overview of school councils already in operation in various parts of the world will be included. In looking at these councils an in depth look at school councils in Australia and the Chicago reform will be done. And, fourth, this chapter will conclude with a section showing the relevance of the literature discussed in this chapter and in chapter one on government initiatives.

Parental Involvement

In considering the pros and cons of the involvement of parents in the educational decision-making process, important arguments exist on both sides of the issue which merit consideration. These arguments make this a problem with no simple solution.

One of the strongest arguments for the involvement of parents in educational decision-making (Marsh, 1988, Marburger, 1978) is that shared decision-making is a crucial ingredient of democracies, and schools must reflect democratic values. Marburger (1978) asserts that what happens in schools affects the rest of society so, society should have input into decisions governing schools. Seely (1985) noted that efforts to return to parents having a voice at all of the various levels has already begun in some

school systems. Dlugosh (1993) expanded this even further as he saw the need for key community members to also be involved in this process. The need for shared decision making including parents is also supported by Hansen and Marburger (1989). The second set of factors favouring the increased involvement of parents is the benefits to the students. The more interest groups involved in education, the greater the chance (Marsh, 1988) that the interests of all students will be taken into account. Still another area where increased parental input has benefits is in increased understanding of and support for the school. Marsh supported this contention when he stated that well informed parents are more likely to support education. If parents have had an opportunity to experience the complexities of the formal learning process and its frustrations, they are more understanding and supportive of the role of education. Barth (1990) supports this as he saw the need to get parents to work towards and assume responsibility for improvements in education along with teachers and principals.

Arguments against the involvement of parents in the educational decision-making process start with the fear of schools becoming an arena for political interest groups (Marsh, 1988). This when, considered in light of general apathy of the public, could lead to a small number of parents being able to dominate the local decision making process (Marsh, 1988). Other concerns arise in the areas of confidentiality (Marsh, 1988), power struggles between school councils and principals and whether or not parents possess sufficient skills in the areas of problem solving and communications skills to be effective participants in the decision-making process (Marsh, 1988).

If parents and other laypeople are to be involved in educational decision making, their role must be a meaningful one. Lyons, Robbins and Smith (1982) point out that if the involvement of parent-advisory groups is to be effective,

the involvement must occur on a regular basis, be in a significant area, and it must have an impact. For this to happen the authority for decision making which is passed on to the school must be shared with all of the stakeholders (Hansen & Marburger, 1989). This can be hard for principals to do. As Hewitson (1992) pointed out, it often means that principals must share their authority with people who may have different values from them. However, if advisory groups are to be effective, this sharing of authority must be genuine. This makes the role of the principal in advisory councils' effectiveness crucial. Foster (1984) indicated that it is often the principals' attitude that determines the effectiveness of the advisory councils.

Summary

I believe that a vital reason why the study of school councils is important to education in Alberta is given by the literature on parental involvement in education. There is a growing feeling that changes are needed in education and that the decisions on these changes are too important to leave entirely up to the professionals (Marsh, 1988; Marburger, 1978; Morris, 1990; Schofield, 1975). Both the desire of parents to be more involved in educational decision-making and the benefits which can occur when parents are involved need to be considered carefully when contemplating the effects of increasing the role of school councils.

Related Research

While much research has been done both on areas related to school councils such as site-based management and school councils in other parts of the world, only limited studies have been done on school councils here in Alberta. For the purpose of exploring in depth previous work on school

councils in Alberta, two studies have been selected. These studies include a government survey done on school councils in 1991 and a masters' project done by Barry Jonson in 1993. In the following sections these two studies and their relevance to the present research will be examined.

Department of Education Survey

In 1990 a survey to determine what effects section #17 of the 1988 School Act had on school councils was undertaken for the Department of Education. To facilitate this study 31 school jurisdictions from across the province were chosen to participate (Alberta Education, 1991). Through either interviews with superintendents or by being nominated by mail by their superintendent, three schools in each jurisdiction were chosen to participate in the study. In each jurisdiction a maximum of eight interviews were conducted. The superintendent, the board chairperson, three principals and three parent chairs of the various parent groups were interviewed. The rates of interviews completed were 87.1% for school board chairpeople, 100% for principals and 76.3% for parent chairs.

The results of the survey were relevant in several areas to the present study. The first area where the summary of results is important is the functions school councils and other parent groups commonly serve. The survey indicated the functions most commonly served included: (a) communication between staff and parents, (b) helping with or running school events, (c) input into the school, (d) fund raising, (e) classroom assistance, and (f) being involved with student oriented programs. Fund raising was least characteristic of "newly formed" groups. Anticipated changes for the next couple of years in terms of parent group functions were in the areas of increased help in the school and increased input into the school.

The second area that seemed to be very relevant to my study dealt with problems encountered in either forming or operating the school councils. The survey summary indicated that most groups found that establishing lines of communications with the various stakeholder groups was a problem and that less than half felt that they had solved the problem (Department of Education, 1991). Other problems that the survey mentioned councils had encountered included making facility changes, making program changes and getting input from the various groups on the important issues. The problem that was most commonly anticipated for the future was parent apathy.

Jonson Project

The other study done on school councils in Alberta was done by Barry Jonson (1993) at the University of Alberta. In his study Jonson surveyed 191 Alberta school councils in 17 different jurisdictions by sending his questionnaires to the chairpersons of the councils. His findings were based on 133 completed, returned questionnaires.

Three main areas of relevance emerge from this study that are pertinent to my study. These areas are: (a) the present roles or functions served by school councils, (b) future role changes seen for school councils, and (c) comments on parental involvement.

In his study, Jonson (1993) found that there were four roles that were the most common to the school councils. These four roles were: (a) providing a communications link between the school and parents, (b) giving advice to and being a sounding board for the school, (c) raising funds for the school and (d) helping the school carry out special events.

His respondents also indicated some areas that they felt the role of the school councils would undergo change in the future. The first change foreseen was an increase in

school councils' influence on education at all levels in the province. They also saw the level of fund raising increasing and the need to encourage more parents to get involved in education.

The final area deals with parental involvement. While Jonson believed that school councils were generally satisfied with their advisory roles, their comments show that they saw a need for increased parent involvement in education. His report also showed that some respondents feel that increased parental involvement may be hard to accomplish because of the current trend of more families with both parents working.

Site-based Management

Site-based management is typically the management style that evolves when school councils with increased input into the decisions made in their local schools are discussed. With this in mind, a discussion of site-based management will help to comprehend the scope of the role changes for school councils. To do this I decided to look at the pros and cons of site-based management as viewed by a variety of authors on the subject.

Setting the Parameters

A number of assumptions are made regarding the nature of site-based management. First, is the assumption that the site-based management model being analyzed closely parallels the model used in the Edmonton Public School Boards schools in terms of decision-making powers being passed on to the schools. Decision making powers delegated to the individual schools are in the areas of supplies, equipment, personnel, maintenance, utilities and, on a pilot basis, consulting services (Brown, 1990). Second is the assumption that in setting up the site-based management model the following

criteria were met: (a) a fair mechanism for allocating money to the school is in place with the bulk of the money following students to the schools (Brown, 1990), (b) a budgeting procedure is in place to help schools with this task (Brown, 1990), (c) site-based management was implemented to help achieve the districts' priorities which include improving education for the students (Neap, 1991), and (d) school plans and budgets developed under site-based management result from the collaborative decision-making process. Now that the parameters have been set, some of the drawbacks to site-based management can be considered.

Problems to be Considered

Both the literature that I read and the two Edmonton administrators whom I interviewed felt that the main drawback to site-based management for schools was that it is time consuming. Right from the initial planning and set up stages through to familiarizing personnel with the day to day accounting procedures, there is a need for a well organized and efficiently implemented plan (Neap, 1991). Considerable time and effort must be expended both in the setting up and getting support for site-based management before the implementation at the school level begins. Once the plan is implemented, it takes time for administrators to familiarize themselves with the mechanics of site-based budgeting and accounting (L. Farris, principal, personal communication, November 8, 1993). Also using collaborative decision-making procedures can cause delays and be inefficient (Neap, 1991).

Another potential problem area is that under site-based management the competition for scarce funds is not eliminated but just downloaded to the school level (Brown, 1990). Depending on how this is handled problems with morale could result. Brown (1991) considered this problem when he wrote:

It would not be good for morale; there may be difficult decisions over whose need is greatest and the squeaky wheel may get the grease. Staff members may be resentful if someone gets something that they wanted and didn't get.(p. 15)

This could have some negative effects on the school as a team out to provide the best learning situations for all students.

Still another potentially problematic area involves the effects of site-based management on principals and how they influence their schools. Collins raises the issue of a possible effect of site-base management on leadership by stating:

Principals working in school based management. . . could become . . . 'more like business managers than educational leaders' within a school. This would not occur by choice, but rather out of necessity.(Brown, 1990, pp. 16-7)

Besides the effects that the possible forced shifting of priorities of the principal could have, the effects that the principal can have on his school are magnified by site-based management (A. Kernahan, administrator, personal communications, November 12, 1993). While an administrator with good collaborative-leadership skills could have a tremendously positive effect on a school, an administrator with poor skills could have a devastating effect on a school.

A further concern with site-based management lies in the area of potential conflict between the decisions made by the site-based management teams and the teacher's unions (Neap, 1991). Many of the decisions made by the site-based management team could involve either working conditions or even the jobs of various teachers. Neap (1991) noted that care must be taken not to put teachers on the site-based management team in positions of conflict with the rules of

their associations. In smaller systems, decisions on utilization of staff become serious issues as there may not be other schools able to offer positions to any staff declared surplus. This is an area which might have to be addressed differently depending on the size of the jurisdiction.

The final set of concerns here are economic concerns. To start with decentralization takes away some of the advantages of economy of scale (Brown, 1981). It becomes harder, if not impossible, for districts to reap the benefits of volume purchasing. Yet another challenge is in designing an allocation mechanism which both treats and is viewed as treating all school, despite their varying populations, equitably. Brown (1990) addressed several concerns in this area by stating:

While many interviewees perceived the system of allocations to be very fair, one criticism to such a mechanism is that when it is linear, small schools have little discretionary income. . . small districts may not be able to apply formulas, which depend on the similarity of schools. . . (p. 222)

Potential Benefits of Site-Based Management

The main benefit of site-based management indicated by the Edmonton Public School Board school-based administrators surveyed by Brown was the increased flexibility at the school level to meet the needs of their schools (1990, pp. 234-7). This was also felt to be the main benefit by the administrators from Edmonton who I interviewed. (L. Farris, personal communications, November 8, 1993)(A. Kernahan, personal communications, November 12, 1993). As Brown stated "One of the strongest arguments for decentralization can be made on the grounds of political expediency. It allows the needs of a diverse group to be met by a single authority" (1981, p6). The individual schools are given the

power to adapt to meet the unique requirements of their cliental. In short, this increased flexibility allows the persons most responsible for the education of students to have control over the educational resources for the school. The importance of having this happen is stressed by Brown (1990) when he writes:

John Goodlad suggested more flexible decision-making at the school level. His recommendations were based on observations of the more effective schools in his extensive study. He noted the desire for more control on the part of teachers and principals. The vision he portrayed is one where schools solved their local problems and became increasingly creative over time. (p. 236)

Giving increased flexibility to the schools should lead into the occurrence of the next benefit, increased ownership.

Having the stakeholders take ownership of education has many potential benefits for a school. Brown (1990) points out the value of this when he writes:

When people are allowed to make decisions and are held accountable for those decision, they tend to be much more analytical and responsible in making those decisions and will strive to make those decisions work. . . . When teachers, students, parents and principals feel they "own" their schools, benefit from their wise decisions, and suffer from their unwise decisions, there is great potential to build a good school. (p. 10)

Neap (1991) indicated that ownership can bring with it increased commitment. Neap (1991) also pointed out that with increased ownership can come an improvement in moral, when he stated:

Research studies conclude consistently that when employees are involved meaningfully in the operation of their organization, their attitude toward the employer is improved; and such an improvement in attitude usually results in better job performance. (pp. 36-7)

Likert also substantiates this in his studies which have shown that individuals tend to be more productive in groups where they feel that they have influence (Handy, 1985). The benefits to a school of increased ownership by teachers, parents, students and administrators can be very substantial.

There are even more benefits to be reaped from the involvement of one particular group of stakeholders, parents. Wilson and Corcoran (1988) do a good job of outlining these possibilities when they write:

First, collaborative links with the community strengthen the technical aspects of the school... Second, strong community involvement makes schools more accessible and attractive places and builds political support. . . Third, participation in school activities by adults other than school staff communicates an important message to students. . . Finally, collaborative activities shape the school-community culture that encourages a sense of concern about the quality of life that is so often missing in today's harried world. (Fullan, 1991, p. 241)

With increased involvement in decision-making comes the probability of stakeholders accepting more responsibility for a host of activities. In accepting these responsibilities, the site-based management team also accepts the responsibility for growth in these areas. Neap (1991) outlined these areas of increased responsibilities:

They must become familiar with the budget process, learn about purchasing, and generally become more accountable, They need to learn how to function in the school in a collaborative manner. In-service programs must be completed on team building, conflict resolution, and problem-solving. All of these new-found challenges create great opportunity for intensified professional growth. (p. 36)

This forced professional growth can also have some economic benefits for the school. By getting the site team involved in budgeting, hopefully some of the following pitfalls of centralized budgeting can be avoided. Neap referred to the system where funds are controlled by a central authority as one which is ripe for abuse (1991). He believes that teachers and principals will have less incentive to save. Brown (1990) suggested that centralized budgeting leads to request padding, the ordering of non-essential items and intensive lobbying. However, when control of the funds is decentralized school staff are more likely to accept responsibility for financial decisions made at the school level and to become protective of money provided to their school (Neap, 1991). This should manifest itself in purchasing only essential supplies and the shopping around for the best buy.

The last benefit of site-based management deals with it being the first step towards meeting a trend that seems to be growing both in government circles and the general public. This trend is the growing movement to have parents involved in a governance capacity in their local schools. Neap (1991) indicated how strong this movement is in the U.S.A. when he stated "Finally, parents increasingly are demanding a voice in the affairs of their local schools" (Neap, 1991, p.5). In Alberta, the provincial government has sent out the message in three different ways. The first means of delivering this message came in section #17 of the School Act of 1988 (Legislative Assembly, 1988). This was followed by the "Achieving the Vision 1992 Report" (Alberta Education, 1993). Part of this report addressed the satisfaction of parents and the community with the amount of input they had on school activities (Alberta Education, 1991). The final means for delivering this message came in the form of a workbook produced for the round table talks. In this workbook "Meeting The Challenges" the government

outlines some possible ways of strengthening parent and community choice and involvement in local schools (Alberta Education, 1993). It is evident that pressure for parent involvement in the decision-making process in local schools is coming from a variety of sources. With these changes in the wind, Bailey (1991) referred to research which spells out the advantages associated with high-involvement management becomes very relevant. He stated:

...the key to organizational effectiveness is decision making. Not only is it important to make the right decisions, it is important to the overall climate as to who makes the decisions. (Bailey, 1991, p.56)

Summary

When evaluating the pros and cons of site-based management for schools there are some important points to keep in mind. First of all, in any evaluation of the effectiveness of site-based, the quality of the educational experiences offered to the students must be a priority. This does cause problems because some of the factors involved in the provision of good educational experiences are both hard to measure and have no agreed upon standard to measure up to. A second point to remember is that any management style should be measured for what it accomplishes and not for what it is. Brown (1990) pinpointed this when he wrote:

Kochen and Deutsch (1980) make the point that decentralization is instrumental - to be judged according to the objectives it achieves and not for its inherent value. (p. 225)

A third consideration to be kept in mind is that, as Brown (1990) pointed out, there are a considerable number of common characteristics between schools using site-based management and effective schools.

When considering the pros and cons of site-based management, keeping the preceding in mind and remembering some of the realities of the times which are: (a) a need to be economically responsible, (b) a need to involve parents in school decisions, (c) a need to provide a continually improving set of education experiences for our students, and (d) the need to increase public support for education, I feel that it could be an important part of the solution. The need to look for new approaches for the delivery of education if we hope to meet the ever-changing demands placed on education. The active involvement of teachers, parents, students, administrators and the community could be an important component to the plan to meet these needs. Lange (1993) shares this view when he wrote, "shared decision making is simply a piece of the larger puzzle that may produce the desired reform outcomes called for by the national, state, and local groups demanding change" (p. 100).

School Councils in Other Countries

Various countries, states and cities have tried different degrees of local autonomy in the decision-making process in education. Often these ventures have taken the form of school councils. These councils vary in their authority from gatherings for the exchange of information between the school and parents, to bodies that make most of the vital decisions concerning education in their local schools.

Australia, New Zealand, Britain and the United States are some countries where local governance of schools is being used. For this literature review two school council systems will be focused on, these include councils in Victoria, Australia and Chicago, United States. Focusing on these settings provided two different school council "set

ups" on which to gather information. One which kept the local central school board and another which did not. The Victoria, Australia system was included because of the similarities between the Australian and Canadian systems, where the individual provinces (states) are responsible for education. This selection was also influenced by the visit of Dr. David Gamage to the University in Edmonton. His recent study of school councils in Victoria provided a unique opportunity to obtain current data on these councils. This is something that doesn't seem to be readily available on school councils in many countries. The reason for including Chicago as one of the school councils on which to focus centred on the immense quantity and scope of data available on the Chicago school reform. Information on the operating styles of different councils, effects on principals, problem areas, and enabling factors are available.

School Councils in Australia

In looking at school councils in Australia, this section will cover five pertinent areas. This includes: (a) history, (b) school councils in Victoria, (c) roles and responsibilities of school councils, (d) effects on principals, and (e) an evaluation.

History

The school system in Australia was run for years as a highly centralized system with important decisions made by and authority kept by central bureaucrats. Gamage (1993) illustrates this when he states "for a period of well over 150 years, all Australian State school systems were fully centralized, fairly rigid, bureaucracies" (pp. 135-136). Marsh (1988) felt that the pressure to move away from such a system and towards increased parental involvement came from

parents, federal agencies, state education officials and politicians. In the State of Victoria, this pressure led to the enactment of the Victorian Education Act of 1975 which, a year later, led to the establishment of school councils as mandatory bodies. Gamage (1993) outlined the roles designated to these councils when he stated, "their power and authority included maintaining accounts, entering into contracts, employment of non-teaching staff, teacher aids and even part-time teachers" (p. 137).

Despite these areas of responsibility being set out in the School Act of 1975, attempts to set up effective school councils faced many difficulties. Marsh (1988) felt that this was a time of competing interests among various groups, especially school councils and principals. After the victory of the Australian Labour Party in the 1982 elections, the educational reforms in Victoria were reviewed. In 1983 the Education Act was again amended. Gamage (1993) described the goals of these amendments as:

In this process, particular emphasis was placed on: 1) genuine devolution of authority and responsibility to the school community; 2) collaborative decision-making; 3) a responsive bureaucracy; 4) effectiveness of educational outcomes; and 5) the active redress of disadvantage and discrimination" (p. 138).

The new amendments came into effect in February of 1984 and the roles of school councils in Victoria changed.

School Councils in Victoria

With the legislation making school councils mandatory and corporate bodies in place, the policies governing membership and the roles of these councils were set. These set the actual parameters in which the councils operate.

Membership

In Victoria the determination of the size of school councils was left up to the individual schools. There were, however, guidelines set governing the composition of all school councils. Gamage (1994) described these guidelines as follows:

In primary schools not less than one half the members were parents, not more than one half were staff members while not more than one fifth were community members. In secondary schools: not less than one third were parents, not more than one third were staff members, not more than one fifth students while another one fifth were community members. In both categories, the principal was an ex-officio member and executive officer. The parents, staff, and students were elected by their respective electorates while the community members were co-opted by the principal and other elected members. (p. 16)

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the school councils in Victoria are summarized in the "Devolution and Accountability Project Report" from the Conference of The Directors' General April, 1992. This report indicates that the councils' roles include the setting of educational policies for their school, managing the building and the grounds, managing finances, employment of non-teaching staff and the use of facilities by other groups. School councils are also involved in the selection of their principals and can manage major and minor building contracts. School councils, in conjunction with their school staffs, also are allowed to develop their own programs, as long as centrally set guidelines are met.

The Directors' General report (1992) also established some areas that school councils are accountable for. School councils became responsible for developing a three-year plan for their school and ensuring the implementation of and

monitoring of progress on this plan. School councils were also required to submit an annual report containing information regarding progress on their three-year plan.

Principals and School Councils

Due to their position in school systems, principals attitudes and skills have a great influence on the effectiveness of their school councils. This is reflected in many of the articles written on school councils throughout the world which look at the role of the principal and the changes that it undergoes. In Australia the role of the principal changed greatly as school councils and school-based management were implemented. Dr. David Gamage (personal communication, April 19, 1994) in his lecture at the University of Alberta stressed some of these changes and what they meant to principals.

To begin with, Dr. Gamage pointed out that when school councils were formed, principals became the chief executive officers of these councils. This meant that principals now had three "masters" to answer to, the department of education, their school council, and their local school community. The move to school councils and site-based management also meant that principals had to share the authority that they had previously enjoyed. Dr. Gamage emphasized that there were now many decisions that had to be made collaboratively and that principals were no longer able to make these decisions unilaterally. Dr. Gamage also stated that principals' communication skills became of paramount importance. Effective lines of communications had to be established and maintained between all of the various stakeholder groups if the councils were to be effective. Another change in role expectations for principals as seen by Dr. Gamage, was that they now had to market their schools and promote extra curricular activities to attract students

while maintaining a positive learning environment for academics.

There are a variety of opinions on how principals view the effects of these changes. Marsh (1988) felt that some principals resented what they perceived to be a decline in their decision-making powers. Chapman and Boyd (1986) found that once the novelty wore off, school level participants, including principals, tended to feel more overburdened by their new roles than they did empowered by them. Gamage (1993) acknowledges that there are those who feel frustrated by the changes when he states "There are also suggestions that teachers and principals alike are frustrated by the increased demands on their time and energy, by the need to assume responsibilities outside their experience and/or by role ambiguities and peer tensions" (pp. 145-146). Gamage (1993) however feels that for the most part the changes have been positive; he illustrates this when he stated:

My own small scale investigation in a primary and secondary school in Victoria reveals that the councils have become highly and efficient organisations, while the principals are highly satisfied and totally committed to the collaborative form of governance adopted in terms of the school council system" (p. 146).

Evaluation of the Move to School Councils

The evaluation of the move to school councils and, through them, site-based management can not be done in a quick and easy manner. When judging the effectiveness of a school council, the external factors which either enable or limit the council's effectiveness must also be considered. These factors can include the culture of the school and the community, the socio-economic status of the community, prevailing attitudes of the interest groups in the community as well as many others. The task of evaluating school councils is further complicated by the various criteria

which could be considered as valuable measures. While the ultimate goal of innovations in education should always be to improve the quality of education offered to the students, where school councils are involved, this is often the long-term goal. The short-term goal seems to be the establishment of school councils as both the voice of governance in each school and the main instrument of change working to bring about improvement in the quality of education provided by the school (Neap, 1991). Therefore studying how these councils view their roles and effectiveness seems to be the first step in evaluating this move to school councils. Many of the studies done in Australia seem to concentrate on this aspect of school councils.

Marsh (1988) looked at the process of initially setting up school councils. He felt that school councils had provided an experience in frustration to many participants. He characterized many school councils as a place where struggles for power occurred between various interest groups. In another early study, Chapman and Boyd (1986) found that participants were also often frustrated by their experiences with school councils. Gamage (1994) summarized Chapman and Boyd's findings when he stated:

Research by Chapman and Boyd has revealed that the initial enthusiasm for community participation in school governance is dampened by numerous factors which combine to make school level participants feel more over burdened than empowered, more distressed than inspired. (p.145)

The various studies done by Gamage tend to show more positive results than do Marsh's or Chapman and Boyd's. In a study done by Gamage and Bell (1992) in New South Wales, school council members expressed positive feelings towards both their involvement as school council members and their accomplishments as such. Gamage (personal communications,

April 25, 1994) in his study conducted in the early 90's of 66 Victoria schools and their councils found some very positive attitudes towards school councils and their roles. Gamage found that 75% of school councils felt that they had adequate power to do their jobs. He also found that over 90% felt that the structure, composition, and over all functioning of their council rated good. Sixty-six per cent felt that there had been some improvements in the teaching/learning environment at their school because of their school council.

While Gamage found positive results in Victoria, he also pointed out some problems that existed in other parts of Australia. In many areas where progress had been slower, he felt that this was due to either a lack of determination of the government's part or the politics played by the various interest groups. Gamage (1993) illustrated where the responsibility for the failure in the move towards school councils in some areas lies when he stated:

On the other hand, in spite of such developments, several initiatives taken, in particular by NSW, Tasmania, and Queensland have not been particularly successful. Yet, this failure could be attributed to the half-heartedness on the part of the governments in pushing through self-governance in schools. Unless school councils are made corporate bodies, the transfer of power and authority to the school community will not be fully effective, while the progress in the establishment of councils could be painfully slow so long as they are not made mandatory. (p. 147)

School Councils in Chicago

The school councils that were formed in Chicago in 1989 are interesting both in the approach that was taken in setting them up and in the scope of their authority. An examination of the circumstances connected with this context

would be beneficial as long as it is kept in mind that educationally important differences exist between the Alberta and Chicago contexts. School councils in Chicago will be examined by looking at the: (a) conditions that led to their formation, (b) unique features of this school reform, (c) reform act and its key features, (d) goals of the Chicago School Reform, (e) division of authority under the school reform, (f) effects to date of the reform, (g) final evaluation of the reform and (h) "Chicago Experience".

Conditions That Led to School Reform

Before the reform there were many conditions that existed in the Chicago schools that greatly limited their effectiveness. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) outline many of these conditions. They indicate that the system was plagued with persistent teacher strikes. On standardized tests, 75% of the students were below the national average. At the high school level, over 50% of the schools scored in the bottom one percent. Of those students entering high school, 50% dropped out. Those students who did graduate were unprepared for even entry level employment and most could not qualify to go on to colleges. These conditions indicated that something had to be done.

Uniqueness of the Chicago School Reform

To deal with these conditions and to try to rectify the problems that they caused, the Chicago reform began. Richard Elmore (Hess, 1993) lists the following reasons why he considers this reform to be unique:

First, it originated from a grass roots political movement, formed around a nucleus of business, philanthropic, and community organizations, in response to increasing evidence of the chronic

failure of schools to educate children. Most other reforms have originated from the action of policy makers, legislatures and governors, at the state level; and at the local level, coalitions of superintendents, union leaders, and board members. Second the Chicago reform is, more than any other, based mainly on the theory that schools can be improved by strengthening democratic control at the school-community level...Third, the Chicago reform is probably more ambitious-some would say radical-than any other current reform in its departure from the established structure of school organization. (p. 68)

The Reform Act

In this section the Reform Act is covered. The points included in this coverage of the Reform Act are: (a) its uniqueness, (b) its features, and (c) goals set by the act.

How the Reform Act is Different

Another way in which the Chicago reform was unique was in what was actually set out by the reform act. Hess and Easton (1991) clearly delineated these points when they discussed the three main parts of the Reform Act. They talked about the act setting specific goals which the schools were to achieve by the end of a five-year period. They also spoke of the capping of non-instructional funds and how this money was to be channelled to the local schools. The final segment that they addressed dealt with the formation of school councils. The majority of the members of these councils were to be parents and the councils have the power to make many of the decisions affecting their local schools. Hess and Easton (1991) highlight what the politicians intent was when they highlighted that the act stated:

...to make the individual local school the essential unit for educational governance and

improvement and to establish process for placing the primary responsibility for school governance and improvement in furtherance of such goals in the hands of parents, community residents, teachers and the school principal at the school level.(P.A. 84-1418, Sec. 34-1.101.B,p. 3)

Under the Reform Act the schools in Chicago were given five years to meet their goals. To enable them to achieve their goals Hess and Easton (1991) indicated school councils were given powers in three general areas, namely setting the school budget, formulating and adopting the school improvement plan and the power to select and hire and fire the school principal.

Features of the Reform Act

The reform act caused a basic restructuring of the governance processes in the Chicago schools. Hess outlined some of these specifics starting with the formation of local school councils (1993). The composition of these councils is defined by Clinchy (1989) when he stated:

Each public school will now be governed by a local school council made up of six parents elected by the school's parents, two teachers elected by the school's staff, and two community residents elected by the residents of the school's district. Neither the parents nor the community residents may be school department employees...The balance of six parents and five non-parents effectively places control of each school's destiny in the hands of its parents. (p. 41)

The second feature of the reform is that each school council is responsible, in conjunction with the school staff and principal, for developing, approving and implementing a three-year improvement plan for the school (Clinchy, 1989). This plan is to focus on improving academic achievement, attendance, and the school's graduation rate.

The right of the Local School Councils to select the principal for their school was a third feature of the reform

(Clinchy, 1989). School principals lost their tenure and were hired on a four year performance contract with the LSC evaluating their performance (Bacchus & Marchiafava, 1991). At the end of four years they could be either rehired or dismissed.

The fourth integral part of the reform was the dissolving of the existing central board of education (Clinchy, 1989). A new central board of education was appointed by the mayor. The appointments were made from a list of nominations put forward by the nominating committee. This committee is composed of some school council members and five members appointed by the mayor.

The fifth and final part of the reform that will be addressed here is the provision that was made to help prepare the school council members for their role. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) described this as follows:

Efforts at improvement have been underway since the councils were elected, and continue today. Council members have received extensive training in educational theory, budgeting, staff evaluation and selection, planning, organization, communications and many other areas. (p. 3)

Goals of the Reform Act

As mentioned earlier one of the aspects of the reform act was that it detailed some specific goals for both the district and the specific schools to meet within five years. These goals are described by Clinchy (1989) as:

1. Each high school must increase its graduation rate (or cut its drop-out rate) by at least five percent each year by the end of the 1993-94 school year.
2. The district as a whole must increase its average daily attendance rate by one percent each year until the 1993-94 school year.
3. By that 1993-94 school year, the percentage of students failing and not advancing to the next grade or graduating must be cut by at least 10 percent each year.

4. And again by that magic year of 1993-94, at least 50 percent of all students in every school - regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender - must score at or above the national norms on standardized tests. (pp. 43-44)

Division of Authority

Under the reform plan the authority for various functions were allocated to one of three groups. These three groups were: (a) the local school councils or LSCs, (b) the central board of education and (c) the principals. The areas of authority given to each are delineated in the following sections.

Powers Given to the LSCs

Under the reform act the LSCs were given certain areas over which they have jurisdiction and some other areas in which they are to advise the principal and the school staff on (Bacchus & Marchiafava, 1991). The LSCs have the power to approve the budget for the spending of discretionary funds and to evaluate, hire, and fire the principals. They also have to approve the improvement plan that the principal and staff develop for the school. The LSCs can make recommendations and advise the principals on the selection of text books, and school policies related to matters such as attendance policies and discipline policies. A final area that the LSCs are involved in concerns staffing. They have the power to evaluate how principals allocate their staff and are able to make recommendations to principals about staff appointments.

Principal's Authority Under the Reform Act

Under the Reform Act, the roles and powers of the principal also underwent revision (Clinchy, 1989). The principal was given authority over the staffing of the school; vacancies and new positions could be filled without

the principal having to consider the applicants seniority with the system. Also, principals could dismiss any teachers who they considered to be providing unsatisfactory service. This could be done after a period of 45 days where the teacher was placed on probation and remedial help had been provided. As well as having the power of staffing for certificated staff, the principal was also in charge of custodial staff and staff in the food service area.

The school improvement plan also fell in the realm of the principals authority (Clinchy, 1989). The principal is responsible for ensuring that these plans are developed and then making sure that they are implemented after having been approved by the LSC. School budgets also fall into this category and become the responsibility of the principal once the LSC has approved it.

Clinchy (1989) identified the final role that falls to the principal under the reform plan as follows:

The principal, working with the school's teaching staff, is responsible for developing both the content and the methods of the school's curriculum, within general guidelines laid down by the school's improvement plan and "system-wide curriculum objectives and standards" devised by the central board of education. (pp. 41-42)

Powers Given to the Central Board of Education

The Chicago School District has been divided into 23 elementary and high school sub-districts (Clinchy, 1989). Each of these sub-districts operates under the Central Board of Education. Each sub-district has its own council, made up of either a parent or community representative elected from each school in that sub-district. The council selects a sub-district superintendent who serves on a four-year performance contract. The superintendent and the sub-district council oversee all of the schools in their area. Their responsibilities include facilitating communications

and cooperation between schools. They promote inter-school collaboration on various projects. Another function they have is to assess how well the schools and their LSCs are performing. Any schools not meeting expectations are placed on probation. Clinchy (1989) explained the process that occurs when a school is placed on probation as:

If the sub-district superintendent spots such a school, it is up to him or her and the sub-district council to put such a school on probation and to develop a remediation plan. If the school still fails to do its job, the sub-district council can request that the central board remove and replace the local school council, the principal, and the staff, and as a last resort close the school down. (p. 42)

There are other powers that have been reserved for the Chicago Central Board of Education. Clinchy (1989) and Hess and Easton (1991) discuss these areas of authority. The central board has the right to evaluate and hire or fire the superintendent. Superintendents are hired on a three-year performance contract. The central board also negotiates and ratifies all contracts with the various unions of the personnel hired by the school district and the various schools. The central board is responsible for developing the system wide educational plan and setting system wide curriculum, curriculum standards and the system wide budget.

It is the responsibility of the central board to make sure that state and nation wide standards are met in certain areas. They have to ensure that the Illinois Board of Higher Education requirements are met by local high schools so that graduates from the system can qualify to attend state universities. They are also required to ensure that federal desegregation programs continue to be implemented.

Effects To Date of the Reform

The reform plan was implemented starting in the fall of 1989. While no conclusive evaluation will be commenced until after the five-year term of the reform is over, some interim reports have been released showing some of the effects of the reform; in this section three of these reports or studies will be examined. These will include: (a) a combination of interim reports on the effects of the reform, (b) a look at the reform from the perspective of the principals, and (c) a look at some of the types of LSCs that have evolved under the reform plan.

A Preliminary Look at the Effects of the Reform

The reform plan has brought about many changes in the way that educational decisions are made in Chicago. Hess (1993) in his look at the effects of the reform as it moved into its third year stated that all schools in Chicago have established LSCs and that for the most part these councils seem to be functioning successfully. Principals have indeed lost tenure and LSCs were given the power to select, hire, and fire principals. Principals when hired were given a four-year performance contract. To date 38% of school councils have decided to replace their principals.

Hess (1993) also noted that one of the key responsibilities of the LSCs, in conjunction with the school staff and principal, was to develop and implement school improvement plans. Schools have complied and most of these plans have focussed on management type issues like improving attendance, discipline policies, and dealing with overcrowding. Very few LSCs have made significant moves in the area of instruction or programs.

Another effect of the reform that Hess (1993) outlines deals with the attitude of teachers towards the reform. He points out that few teachers expected to have much input

into or to be involved in the reform. However at the midway point of the initial five-year period, the majority of teachers were at least mildly positive about the effects of the reform up to that point. They also felt that their level of representation was fair. Despite these positive feelings, less than half of the teachers felt that the reform had any affect on their in classroom instruction.

With regard to evaluating the success of the reform, Hess (1993) indicated that he felt that it was far too early to expect to see an improvement in student achievement. When looking at some of the other goals of the Reform Act, Hess stated:

Other measures, such as dropout rates, continue to reflect prior years of neglect, while students who have experienced major changes under reform are still several years from graduation. Attendance rates for elementary schools remain flat; at the high school level, they have declined slightly, reflecting closer recording scrutiny. (73)

While these areas are inconclusive as measures of the success or failure of the reform plan, Hess and Easton (1991) indicated that there is one area in which the reform had been a success. They note that one of the concerns expressed by the critics of the Chicago reform plan dealt with their perception that parents and teachers would have trouble working together. Hess and Easton (1991) felt that the "near unanimous" support given to most matters dealt with by the LSCs refutes this fear.

Despite the seemingly good working relations of the councils, the LSCs endured some major frustrations. Hess and Easton (1991) refer to three such frustrations in their article. The first of these frustrations arose when, in 1989, the newly formed LSCs tried to find a public place to meet. The schools were unavailable as the central boards contract with the operating engineers called for the schools

to be open only four nights a year. After considerable difficulty for LSCs this was rectified.

The second frustration dealt with the concern from some LSCs about poor attendance of some members. Some LSCs found it difficult to achieve the continuity needed to set budgets when the average attendance rate for parents was just over 60%. They requested that the reform act be amended to allow the removal non-attending members.

The third frustration of LSCs identified by Hess and Easton (1991) cover deals with problems that these councils had in their relationship with the central board of education. There have been disputes over areas of authority, functions of central office personnel, and over a perceived lack of support of the LSCs by the central board.

The Principals' Perspective

Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) stressed that principals, as a group, felt the greatest pressure from the reform. They lost tenure under the reform act, they had to assume an expanded role and they had to deal with a new decision-making process. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) also emphasized that all of the changes have placed increased demands on the already scarce commodity of time for principals. Ford (1991) also feels that these changes caused some negative feelings to manifest themselves in principals. When this is considered with the fact, as stated by Hess, that 38% of all schools decided to replace their principals, it is important to look at how this group views the reform.

In June of 1992, the Consortium on Chicago School Research surveyed some Chicago school principals (Bennett, Bryk, Easton, Kerbow, Lupescu, & Sebring, 1992). They only surveyed principals who were Chicago public school principals prior to the start of the reform in 1989. This

survey looked at how principals perceived the reform and its effects.

While most principals surveyed felt that their schools were improving since the implementation of the reform, and two-thirds felt optimistic that their school would continue to improve, there was a discordant note (Bennett et al., 1992). Only about 40% of the principals felt better about working in their schools.

Relations between the principals and their LSCs seemed to be basically good. There seemed to be few problems between the principals and the LSCs as far as their roles. Eighty percent of the principals felt that their LSCs had the same view of the principal's role as they did. Ninety percent felt the their LSC did not meddle in school affairs and let the principals run the schools.

When it came to the matter of evaluation, 60% of the principals felt that their LSC used a fair and objective approach to evaluating them. However, only 37% felt that the evaluation procedure gave them any constructive feedback.

Throughout the survey principals seemed to convey a mixed message. They indicated that in many respects things were improving, but they also felt that their role had become more difficult and less satisfying (Bennett et al, 1992). In keeping with this, 94% of the principals responding to the survey felt that they were making a difference in the academic development of their students. However, 95% also felt that the public had less respect for principals since the reform.

Types of Councils That Have Evolved

After the third year of the Chicago school reform, John Easton et al. undertook a study of fourteen different school councils to see if there were significant differences in the way that they operated (1993). They found that

councils could be grouped into four different categories depending on how school governance was approached.

Easton et al. (1993) identified the groups using the first type of governance style as "limited governance LSCs." These LSCs were characterized by low member participation and were not very active. The principals generally ran these LSCs and as a group they provided little in the way of leadership for their schools. The amount of information provided to the council was limited, few motions were made and meetings tended to be short. Easton et al. (1993) indicated that this approach to governance did not make use of the LSCs as a helpful resource for the schools.

The second type of governance style, as identified by Easton (1993), was the "moderate-governance LSCs." These councils tended to only be leaders in their schools in crisis situations. The principals tended to run these LSCs and aside from the chair person, parent representatives took an inactive role on these councils. In general, the LSCs were presented with information and the principals' recommendations regarding the matters discussed. Good relations between the school professionals and the parent members seemed to persist.

The "balanced-governance councils" was the third governance style Easton et al. found (1993). These councils were leaders in their schools and often were also involved with community issues. The leadership role was shared between the chairperson and the principal. Important issues were discussed in detail and information was readily available to all members. A feeling of trust and good will seemed prevalent. Easton et al. (1993) felt that this was the best governance style.

The final governance style examined by Easton et al. was the "excessive-governance LSCs" (1993). These councils dealt with many more issues and made many more motions than LSCs in the other governance types. The relationship

between the parent representatives and the professional staff was at best antagonistic. There was a prevalent feeling that not all information was being shared with all members. While these councils did play a active leadership role in their schools, their meetings were often long and agendas were often not completed.

Evaluation of the Chicago Reform

When the Chicago school reform was initiated in 1989, a five-year term was set for reaching its goals. This means that at the end of this school year, 1993-94, the reform is to be evaluated to see if it has met its objectives. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) indicate this time line may be unrealistic when they stated:

Although the act speaks to achieving its outcome goals in five years, a more realistic view is that it will take five years to fully implement the new visions of education presented by the act. After five years, we hope to see some significant improvement on key indicators; after ten years, we look for substantial betterment of student outcome measures. (p. 6)

When the powers that be are ready to evaluate the reform in Chicago, they will have to have a set of guidelines, standards, priorities and indicators clearly defined and hopefully agreed upon. As the section on effects has suggested, there have been changes in attitudes towards schools as well as actual support for the schools. Many of the other areas, however, have shown little if any change. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) have outlined some of the questions that they feel need to be addressed:

There are other large questions about reform that have yet to be answered. Answering them is outside the scope of this report, but they should be put forth:

How is reform to be assessed, both formatively and summatively? What are the appropriate outcomes, and the most reliable (that is predictive) indicators? How is the administration to monitor the progress of schools? Under what circumstances and in what manner is the administration to intervene in schools? (p.7)

All these issues need to be dealt with and clarified in the minds of the stakeholder groups. Once this has been accomplished, meaningful evaluation of the reform in Chicago can be carried out.

Summary

The Chicago reform is in its fifth year. After this year its progress is to be evaluated. Some of the analysts have already looked at the reform and in certain areas have perceived benefits from it. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) feel that despite the criticisms and lawsuits, under the reform LSCs at each school has been set up and are running in a generally positive manner. They also see the increased involvement of parents and community with the professional staff as a benefit. These new ideas and attitudes will benefit the students and schools in Chicago. Ayers also showed that he shares this opinion with "The fact that 6 000 citizens are convening regularly and focusing their energies on the schools is a positive thing" (Ayers, 1991). Glass (1991) also saw the meaningful involvement of parents and community in the schools as a positive.

As well as looking back, the participants in the Chicago reform have to look ahead. In the future the problems that were discussed earlier about the lack of clarity of roles and perceived lack of support of the LSCs by the central board have to be dealt with. Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) also, see the need for the central board to assume a facilitators role, not just a watchdog role,

with respect to the individual schools. They also see a need for some of the deleted infra-structure support systems to be rebuilt. They feel that the changes to date have been surface changes and that it is now time to address the issue of actually changing the cultures of the individual schools.

CHAPTER 3

Research Method and Design

Introduction

This chapter contains a description of the method used in this study. It focuses on: (a) the type of study conducted; (b) the target population, the accessible population and sampling information; (c) a description of data collecting procedures; (d) an explanation of how the data were analyzed; and (e) validity considerations in this study.

Type of Study

This study was a qualitative study in which five parents who were school council members and five principals, all from Sturgeon School Division, were interviewed. Its main objective was to build a diverse base of knowledge about both present school councils and perceptions of future councils in Sturgeon School Division from the perspective of both school council members and school-based administrators. It involved the use of both inductive and deductive data analysis approaches. It was deductive in that data were collected for a set of predetermined categories which were set after looking at related literature. These categories were: (a) present roles of school councils, (b) meetings and council composition, (c) problems encountered, (d) factors that enabled or limited councils' effectiveness, (e) benefits, (f) future roles for school councils, (g) potential problem areas, (h) skills that council members need, (i) resources or conditions needed by councils to be effective, and (j) who should be on councils. Inductive analysis of the interviews led to the development of the

following categories: (a) concerns with school councils and (b) who should set the roles for school councils.

Sampling

The target population included all school council members in Alberta. The accessible population was limited to present school council members and school based administrators in Sturgeon School Division who, when approached, consented to being interviewed.

The sampling strategy involved the use of purposive sampling in order to produce a compilation of data reflecting, as fully as possible the variety of school councils in Sturgeon School Division. With this in mind, a list of possible candidates for the study was compiled. Individuals were placed into broad groups reflecting their perceived views on the roles of school councils. These perceptions were based on the experiences that some Sturgeon Central Office Personnel had with the various school councils and information from a variety of other sources as to the roles played by the various school councils. Candidates from each group (principals and school council members) were approached to participate. When an individual declined, a replacement, who tended to hold similar views, was approached.

Data Collection Procedures

The research data for this study were collected using a semistructured interview. The first interview was piloted with a parent who is a school council member as the respondent. This interview was done on February 6, 1994 and the questions used are contained in the interview schedule (appendix A). This interview consisted of 13 questions which collected data in the desired areas both for present

and perceived school councils. This interview was audio taped. The tape was then coded to protect the identity of the respondent and then transcribed. The respondent then read the transcript to both verify its content and to decide if she was willing to allow it to be used in the study.

After analyzing this first interview, several changes were made to the process before the second interview was conducted. The first of these changes was made because the respondent in the first interview seemed to have some confusion whether certain questions applied to the present situation, the perceived situation or both. This led to a second interview schedule (appendix B) being developed which divided the questions into two distinct parts. Part A delves into the present school councils and part B looks at the perceptions for future school councils. The second change involved changing to a more informal interview approach to the whole interview procedure. The questions were presented in a manner which resembled a casual conversation more than the first procedure did. While phrases were used to invite added input, care was taken to not give judgemental responses. This seemed to encourage the respondent to volunteer more information that was above and beyond that asked for by the actual questions.

The second interview was conducted with a school-based administrator from Sturgeon. This interview was also audio taped; this tape was coded, and then transcribed. Once again, the respondent was asked to read the transcript to verify that it expressed his feelings and to give permission to use it in the study.

To deal with the problems which are inherent in interviews I made the following three adjustments. First, the questions were adjusted to make them clearer and to ensure that they asked what I intended. Second, interviews were taped, later transcribed, and verified for intended meaning with the respondents to reduce the influence of

interviewer bias. Finally, to deal with many of the problems of disposition of both respondent and interviewer, practice interviews were conducted to help to develop an interview style which put the respondents at ease and exerted a minimum influence on the responses given. Once the questions and process had been adjusted, they were used for the ten interviews done in this study.

Analysis of Data

This study involved the collection of data from two distinct groups, school-council members and school-based administrators. The data collected from each group were analyzed separately by first fitting it into the predetermined categories. These categories were set up based on the review of the literature. In particular the categories in the government survey done by Alberta Education titled "A Study Of The Impact Of The School Council Section In The 1988 School Act" and categories added after the pilot interviews were used. Once this was done, the transcripts were reread to see if other themes emerged that might need to be added to future interviews. After this, another person read through the transcripts and listed the categories that he felt emerged from the data. I then compared this list of categories with mine looking carefully for similarities and differences between the two lists. This caused me to re-evaluate my categories and to justify to myself the reasons for choosing them. This was done to help overcome the effects of my biases and expectancies with regards to this study.

The next step in the analysis of data consisted of laying out the range of both present councils' roles and operation and perceptions for future councils. In this study, the opinions of five school council members were used

for the one group and the opinions of five principals for the other group.

After the data in each group were collected, categorized, and the range set, the information was compiled into statements for each category. The data from the school council members group and from the administrators group were then compared and contrasted. At this time, themes and patterns were also looked for in the feed back data.

Validity

The sample is made up of volunteers from Sturgeon School Division who fit the criteria set in my purposive sampling. This affects the generalizability of the findings in this study. To help minimize this a section has been included at the start of chapter 4 titled "Background Information." This should help improve external validity as it gives information about the conditions, setting and context in which these school councils operate in Sturgeon School Division. This information can be analyzed to determine how applicable the findings of this study are to other areas within the province.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Data

Introduction

Data for this study came from two main sources and one minor source. The first source consisted of a series of interviews done with five individuals who are currently members of the various school councils operating with in Sturgeon School Division. The second source consisted of a series of five interviews done with five principals from Sturgeon School Division. An auxiliary source of information was the Sturgeon School Division's policy on school councils (Appendix C).

The actual presentation of the data contains: (a) a brief look at the policy that governs the formation of school councils in Sturgeon, (b) a summary of some of the basic characteristics of the councils based on information taken from both sets of interviews, (c) the information collected during the interviews with the councils members, and (d) the information collect during the interviews with the principals. This is done by sorting the data into the categories which were established while reviewing the relevant literature, analyzing the government study done in 1991 (Alberta Education, 1991) and categories which were added after the pilot study was done.

Background Information

Governing Policy

The Sturgeon School Board put a policy in place on June 7, 1989 regarding the constitution and operation of School Councils. This policy was revised on May 16, 1990 (Appendix C) and is still in effect. This policy introduces the

board's philosophy regarding school councils. The policy states the board's belief that "School Councils provide valuable advisory assistance to the school principal and to the Board" (Sturgeon, 1990, C/3,p-1). The policy also indicates that not only does the board support the formation of or recognition of those councils that already exist, but also the expectation that principals will on a yearly basis give parents the opportunity to form school councils.

The policy then proceeds to give guidelines for the establishment of school councils, lists rules for the continuance of school councils, and even deals with the possible dissolution of a school council. This latter action is only undertaken in the advent of a minimum of 5% of the parents of students attending the school request dissolution. If a school council is dissolved, it is done so for only the remainder of that school year. In September of the following school year parents must be given the option of forming a new school council.

Mechanics of School Councils in Sturgeon

This section gives a brief overview of the composition of school councils in Sturgeon School Division and the frequency of their meetings. The data collected from both the interviews with the school council members and with principals were used in this section. Between these two sets of interviews, similarities and differences in eight out of the eleven schools in Sturgeon were addressed.

Composition of present councils. The composition of the various school councils in Sturgeon seemed very similar. None of the eight councils had permanent or regular representation from other community groups or the community at large. Most groups did, however, have established links through which communication with these other organizations were facilitated and often employed.

The way in which the distribution of parents on the councils was set varied from council to council. Four of the councils tried to have a representative for each class room in their school. One council nominated all parents who showed up at the meeting as full fledged voting members. The other three councils took parents from the parent population at large as the parents either volunteered to be on the council or were persuaded to be council members. All council meetings were open to any interested parents who wished to attend.

In the area of staff representation, there were some variations from school to school. The principal and vice-principal were generally members of all of the councils. Three of the school councils had staff members who were regular representatives on the councils. One of the councils had a member of the office staff who was also a voting member. The other four councils had staff members attend either to present information to the council or if a topic being looked at interested them.

All council meeting were attended at various times by school trustees. This happened on a regular basis at most of the council meetings.

Frequency of meetings. The frequency of meetings held by school councils in Sturgeon was very uniform. All councils met once per month, except in December and June, when several councils did not hold meetings. Four of the respondents mentioned that their councils also scheduled emergency meetings when needed.

School Council Members Interview Data

Present School Councils

The data on existing school councils in Sturgeon which were collected from council members were divided into four different categories. These categories were: (a) the present roles of the councils, (b) any problems encountered in setting up or running the councils, (c) factors that enabled or limited the effectiveness of the councils, and (d) benefits derived by the various stakeholder groups from the existence of the school councils. The way the data are presented provides the scope of the data collected and highlights some specific aspect which were considered important. The five school council members are referred to as Mary, Milly, Jan, Joy and Rita.

Present Roles of School Councils

All of the council members interviewed felt that one of the main roles and functions of school councils was in the area of communication. This role was accomplished in various ways. Mary, Milly, Joy and Jan indicated that in some instances the council provided a forum for the school or individual staff members to present new programs, ideas on projects or policies to the council for feedback. Jan stated that besides providing a sounding board for the school to use, this procedure facilitated staff and parents getting to know each other. Mary, Jan, and Rita felt that the information also flowed in the other direction. Council members could bring in concerns from their parents to the council for discussion. This, along with encouraging and even arranging meetings between parents and school, expedited communications between these two groups.

While communication and acting as a liaison between the school and the parents were viewed as an integral part of

the school councils' role, other important roles were also mentioned. Four of the councils were, or had been, involved in fund raising. Three of the councils had been part of a fund raising group for constructing playgrounds at their respective schools. Two of the groups had worked with the school staff on formulating new policies for the school. Four of the councils were also involved in sponsoring or running activities which improved the quality of school life for the students. An example of such a project was the hot lunch programs run in these schools.

Problems Encountered

A number of problems were encountered by school councils in either setting up their councils or in operating them. The main problem that councils dealt with was the difficulty in getting members. Three of the respondents cited this as their main problem. The opinion was expressed by Mary and Rita that the only time when people really got involved was when there was an issue to deal with and unfortunately this was not usually positive. Milly felt that this problem would continue with the number of working parents increasing, and others not wanting to give the time commitment needed to be on the council.

Another concern expressed by Mary related to the problem of keeping parents who volunteered involved after their children left the primary grades. She felt that if you had not found a niche for them by the time their children were in grade two, they would probably stop volunteering to be on the school council.

One cause of this problem, in addition to the busy lives that parents have, was seen to be the lack of a definite and meaningful role for the school councils. Milly felt school councils would have to know the long range goals and plans of the school so that their plans could have some continuity from year to year.

Limiting and Enabling Factors

Limiting factors. There were some factors that the council members felt limited or could limit the effectiveness of their councils. Two respondents felt that the important role played by the principal in setting the extent to which the council had meaningful input was potentially a limiting factor. Jan talked about this problem by stating, "If we get a new principal next year who doesn't think we are worth anything, then we are out in the cold. That is the real problem, I think that it should not be principal dependent". Another respondent also saw the principals' role as possibly being limiting when the principal's ideas and the councils members' ideas as to the role of the council differ. Mary stated the following:

Even if we have concerns were does it go? Where do we take them? There is no proven path to follow, if there is, you can go through your principal and that chain of command. That doesn't necessarily...I wouldn't want to do that. I wouldn't want to force the council into doing that kind of thing either. Because it is to be building a healthy spirit between the community and the school. That kind of a pathway doesn't exactly do that.

These same concerns, but with respect to the staff, were expressed by another respondent. Mary stated, "If you don't have people who are willing to work with you then it is a bit harder, I would say".

The only other concern that was seen as limiting the council's effectiveness was the lack of clarity for the role which the council was to play. Mary felt this caused the objectives for the council to be set from year to year and made it hard for the council to decide on long-term projects.

Enabling Factors. Milly and Joy felt the principal and in some cases the school staff were the major factors that enabled school councils to operate effectively. Their openness to let the council know their expectations and their willingness to share vital information were definitely seen as enabling factors. Jan felt that the principal had been excellent in this area. He had sought input through surveys and had relayed the results back to the parents. Joy felt that the principal communicated well with the council, by providing them with relevant information. Mary, Milly, and Jan all felt that the staff had enabled the councils to be effective. Mary felt that having the teachers in during school council meetings to talk about their programs, not only gave the council much needed information, it also gave the council and teachers a place to start in building a good working relationship. Milly stated the following:

I think the first thing being, that our staff is willing to work with us as parents to create a family environment here, and I think that is the number one best advantage that this school has. If you don't have people that are willing to work with you then it's a little harder I would say. I think another thing is we each look at each other as friends first " .

The fact that the councils members were a cohesive group whose purpose was to benefit the students and the school was seen as an enabling factor by Rita. The willingness of the school board trustees to come and share information was also seen as a positive by Mary, Joy, and Rita.

Benefits Presently Derived From School Councils

The benefits derived from the increased communications facilitated by school councils and from having other adults

in the school are numerous. Four of the respondents felt that the presentations made by staff on programs or policy provided benefits to the school and to the parents. Parents were able to keep abreast of planned changes and have input at the planning stage of these changes. This helped the parents to be better informed and gave the school much needed feedback on parental feelings and the degree to which there was acceptance of school initiatives. The councils also provided a sounding board for the school board to use if they so chose. Joy felt that this information also helped parents better understand the challenges facing the school staff and the administration, and that this made the parents more understanding of the school's actions.

Mary felt another benefit of this avenue of communications was that a channel was provided to the school board through which the public was informed of their activities. This helped the council to understand current school board thinking and helped councils to plan their activities.

Having adults other than teachers in the school was also perceived as a benefit by several respondents. Milly felt that seeing other adults or parents take an interest in the school probably encouraged the students to stay in school longer. Mary stated the following on this issue:

When you are in the school more often there is more sharing and the children benefit more. If the advisory council could be of more assistance to encourage more people to come into the school, this enriches the children's programs. With more adult contact, with different perspectives, different ideas, it can't help but enrich them.

There were some other benefits that members indicated were the result of the school councils. Joy felt that this was one way to give parents more input into and control over the education of their children. Mary and Jan felt that

these councils gave the parents a chance to develop different and more positive relationships with the staff and the administration. Jan also felt that the school and community are so intertwined that having more parents involved in the school also helped the community.

Perceptions on the Future of School Councils

The perceptions about the future of school councils in Sturgeon fall into eight categories. These categories include: (a) roles for school councils, (b) composition of school councils, (b) problems that councils could encounter, (c) conditions that need to exist for these councils to be effective, (d) skills that school councils members need, (e) benefits that these councils could bring, (f) concerns about these councils and their effects, and (g) who should define the role for these councils.

Roles For School Councils

The perceived roles for school councils in the future varied greatly, although all members seemed to see a need for an increased role for school councils. This variation occurred both in the type of roles that were projected for school councils and in the amount of authority that it was seen as appropriate for them to have. The latter ranged from being a sounding board for the school and school board, through an integral part of a school-based management team to a mini board collaboratively looking after many decisions in the local school with the school board.

All members expressed the view the facilitation of communications would still be a crucial role for the school council to play. Mary felt that there was a need to make every effort to make communication more effective. Rita added another dimension to this by stating the following:

I think that the ideal role is to still be, between the community and the school or school board, the liaison. In a sense perhaps a little bit of a watch dog. Sometimes the parents can see things from a different point of view than teachers can....certain things that maybe the staff feel will work well, time wise parents may find a problem.

There were other areas that the respondents felt school councils should have increased input into. Three of the members felt that programs were one such area. Joy seemed to sum up the feelings in this area by stating that parents should have input on the programs taught but the decisions on how they are taught should be left to the teacher. Discipline and the school's policy on discipline was another area that members thought that the council should address. Jan seemed to focus the thoughts of several other members in on this topic by stating:

We can set lines and say we will accept this type of behaviour and not that type of behaviour and you are out of here. It is much more difficult for a school to do that than it would be for a parent run school to say that. Our school, our rules, if you don't like it you can come to the School Council Meeting and we will see where the community is on this issue.

Four of the members interviewed felt that the councils should be part of the process in which the school budget was set. This varied from being the group that finalized how limited resources were allocated to meet the needs of the school, to being part of the process for the information that it provided.

There were two council members who felt that councils should play a role similar to a mini school board in their local schools. One member felt that the decisions made at the local level should be subject to board approval in all matters. The other member felt that there should be areas which the local school council looks after with the

principal acting as their chief executive officer. This council would look after programs and policy. A regional board would look after district type issues.

A final role which three of the five members mentioned dealt with staffing. One member stated that the council should not be involved in the hiring and firing of teachers, but that councils should be consulted on the hiring of principals as councils and principals have to work closely together. Another member felt that while the council should not have final say in this area, their concerns needed to be addressed by administration when problems arose. The third council member, Jan, indicated the importance to school councils of this area when she stated that the staff was the most important part of a school. Therefore the council should have the power to select a principal. The principal would work on a term performance contract. The principal would have the power to hire and fire staff.

Composition

The council members all agreed that the majority of the members of a school council should be parents who had students attending the school. The general consensus was that the members of a school council should be elected and in most cases they felt that the terms should be for more than one year. In one case the opinion was expressed that parents should prove themselves first as volunteers before being allowed to serve on a school council.

Council members saw the principals as key members of any school council. They were seen as possessing the capabilities to make councils either very successful or to hinder the effectiveness of the councils. Teaching staff were also considered to be an integral part of school councils by four of the respondents. Some members also saw the need to involve other school staff in the school councils.

them to accept at this time. These parents would have to be worked with and brought along slowly in respects to setting up councils like this.

The second group of problems and concerns centred around the council members themselves. Members felt that it would get harder and harder to get parents to volunteer to sit on councils, unless there was a controversial issue to deal with. They also expressed the opinion that most parents who served on these councils would feel pressed for time as life styles seem to be getting more hectic. With these thoughts in mind, concerns about continuity for the councils and making the councils accountable for their decisions were raised. The final point in this set of concerns deals with the problems that arise when a council member with an important role who does not meet the expectations of the other council members. Even if a problem of this nature is dealt with tactfully, there can be spin-off effects having negative ramifications for the council and the community.

The third set of problems and concerns deals with community groups from either end of the input spectrum. Concerns were expressed about the possibility of having interest groups of either community members or parents who took over and dominated a school council. Their agendas would then become of the focus of the council. On the other end of the spectrum the concern was expressed that it might be difficult to get the input of community members who were not connected with the school.

Conditions That Need to Exist

Although there are important differences among the possible roles foreseen for school councils, the members interviewed did agree on one point: the roles need to be more meaningful for future councils to be effective. The respondents hoped that a more meaningful role for school

Three of the members also indicated a need to involve other members of the local community in the councils. The opinion was frequently expressed that the other rate payers should have some input into school councils. In two cases, however, the concern was expressed that care would have to be taken to make sure that academics remained the focus of the school and that the councils' main objective should be to promote this. One member felt that there was sufficient communication among the various service groups in her area with out the need for formal representation and the final member expressed concerns about having other community members on the school council.

Problems and Concerns

The problems and concerns that were foreseen fall into three main groups or areas. The first of these areas pertains to the role of the council. The need to make the role meaningful and for people to feel that their efforts could make a difference was a common theme throughout all of the five council members' interviews. At a minimum, they felt that it was essential for council's input to be heard and considered by the principal and school staff. The reaction to and willingness to work with the councils by the staff and principal were vital for a council to have a meaningful role. Another related concern that was expressed by one council member was that the council should not be assigned roles by the board unless the council had been checked with first. The assumption should not be made that the council wants input in all areas. Two council members expressed concerns that school boards might not be willing to give school councils enough authority to make their roles meaningful. A final concern put forward by one council member was that parents might not be ready to accept councils with the power that she would like them to have. They may find the idea of councils like this too radical for

councils would lead to more people who really cared about the education of children getting involved in the councils. Jan expressed a feeling shared by most of the others by stating, "I really believe quite strongly that parents are ultimately responsible for the education of their children and if you have to beat them into getting involved, that is what you have to do."

Several members felt that a more defined role was needed for councils to operate effectively. The councils needed to have both a sense of the direction that they were moving in as well as the direction that the school and the district were moving in. One member expressed the opinion that a legislative change would be needed to give school councils direction.

There were several other conditions that were felt to be important. The first noted by three councils members was having access to more information. If school councils are to play a more meaningful role and help make wise decisions, they are going to have to have better access to information. This information must include details of both long and short term projects and priorities. Another condition that was raised was developing a closer relationship with the school board.

Skills Which School Council Members Should Possess

When discussing skills that school council members should possess in order to be effective, the commitment of the individuals to children and their education was given as a prerequisite in most cases. A second set of important skills included the ability to communicate effectively. It was felt that effective council members would have to be able to express their thoughts clearly, be able to listen to and understand others' feelings, and be able to express the concerns brought to them by other parents.

Another important skill that was stressed included the ability to work with others in a group. Council members were seen as needing to be able to negotiate and to work towards consensus on various issues. It was also felt that they needed to be able to take constructive criticism.

Perceived Benefits

The benefits that the members perceived would exist under the new school councils were an extension of the benefits presently being experienced due to the existence of school councils. This is especially true when looking at the benefits of improved communications between the home and the school. This is one of the primary benefits in either the present or future school councils which has far reaching effects in many other areas.

A new benefit for Sturgeon Schools that was expressed was the increased feeling of ownership that stakeholders would feel. It was felt that in the case of the parents, this increased involvement at the school level might lead to an increased involvement in the school lives of their children. This along with being better informed and having a say in the type of education that their children receive were the main benefits to parents.

Another benefit to children of having more parental involvement in schools emerges from the wider range of experiences that they would have the opportunity to experience. This would occur from having input from a larger group of adults. Also the increased parental involvement was seen as having some positive ramifications for the students.

The school could also experience some very positive effects as a result of these councils. Two members expressed the feeling that school administrators and the school in general could be greatly empowered by school councils. If the parents on the councils helped set the

guidelines for discipline and conduct, the community support would be greater. This was best summed up by Mary when she stated:

I think that it is important to use...for God's sake use your parents' advisory council or you are going to end up in hot water when you don't have to if you had done your homework. Plus if you have the support of your parents' advisory council as an administrator, you are laughing, so use them.

This same feeling was expressed by Jan when she stated:

I noticed this on the discipline committee last year, they would say we are not going to deal with this. You deal with it at home. When this comes from parents, I think that it has more clout. Especially if it is your neighbour saying it rather than a teacher who lives elsewhere.

A final possible future benefit of school councils that was perceived was the ability of schools to meet the needs of their unique communities. One member mentioned that they have some local programs that are very effective in helping meet the needs of the students in their local school. If school councils and the school were given more say in programming for the local school, they wouldn't worry about losing these programs.

Who Should Set the Roles for School Councils

All members felt that the roles for each local school council should be set to meet the needs and desires of that school community. All saw this as a collaborative process with the major stakeholders needing to have input. In most cases the feeling was expressed that the school, the school council, and the school board should work out the role for each individual council. Two members expressed the opinion that there was a need for guiding legislation in this area. Rita summed up the feeling in this area by stating:

I think it has to be a cooperative effort between the members themselves, the staff and the principal at the school and to a certain extent the board. Some staff are more comfortable with a lot of parent involvement than others are.... I think there should be general umbrella policies provincially, but I don't think that they should be too specific.

The Administrators' Point of View

The data discussed in this part of the study were collected in a series of interviews conducted with five Sturgeon School Division principals. The interviews were semistructured (Appendix B) and every effort was made to use open-ended questions to encourage the respondents to volunteer any information that they felt was pertinent. These data are presented in two parts, first is a discussion of how school councils presently operate in Sturgeon, and then a look at the principals' perspectives about school councils in the future is presented. The principals are referred to in this section using Bud, Joe, Bob, Don, and Art.

Present School Councils in Sturgeon

The discussion below centres on how school councils were operating in Sturgeon at the time of data collection for this study. These data are organized into the categories of: (a) present roles of school councils, (b) problems encountered by these councils in either becoming established or in operating, (c) factors limiting or enabling school councils' effectiveness, and (d) benefits of having these councils operate.

Present Roles of School Councils

There were a core of roles that were consistent among all five councils described by the administrators. All five felt that the various ways that school councils facilitate communications were invaluable. One of the avenues of communication which was opened by the councils consisted of providing a forum for teachers to present information regarding programs in which they were involved. This made vital information available to council members which, in turn they disseminate to the parents and community at large. The school could also use this channel to help disseminate information to parents.

Four of the principals saw this role for councils as transcending the function of information carrier to the higher level of providing a liaison between the school and parents or community. Pertinent information, perceptions and attitudes could be conveyed back and forth among these various stakeholders.

Of the five administrators interviewed, only one indicated that his council was not involved in fund raising. To varying degrees, this seems to be a function that most councils undertake. In one case it was reported that fund raising was undertaken by the council to help support the school's endeavour in running some special programs.

Other functions that councils served dealt with schools using them as "sounding boards" for various school level policies and procedures. In most councils these topics were given to the group to consider and reactions were fed back by the council members to the administrator. In some cases the feedback involved the council members seeking input from other parents before giving their responses at the council meeting. In one council, parent-council members were members of the school-discipline committee, school-budget committee and the school-climate committee along with staff and the administration.

Some other functions performed by school councils included running hot-lunch programs, helping in playground construction and running various activities for students, particularly on days when they were forced to remain inside during lunch recess. These along with helping to procure volunteers for many in and out of class activities and programs, rounds out the list of functions served by the school councils.

Problems Encountered

There was one main area in which administrators felt that their councils had experienced difficulties getting an adequate number of volunteers for candidates as council members. This was seen as necessary if the council was to be representative of the parents and the community. The busy lifestyles that are common in society today makes this hard to accomplish. This problem was illustrated by Bob when he stated the following:

The biggest problem is getting a representative group, like our group has always been dominated by grades one, two and three parents. Then it kind of wanes off and you get a few less four, five and sixes and you are lucky to get anybody out of junior high.

There were several other problems which were each mentioned by one principal. The first one dealt with people on the executive who let their own agendas set the tone for the council. Joe suggested this to be a problem by stating, "...we will have one person trying to edit an agenda, a single agenda and that is their agenda. The other people are saying, whoa, that is not quite what we have in mind".

A final problem was raised by a principal who had a parent who was a council member sitting on the school's budget committee. There was a certain amount of educating which had to be done before this member could be play a

meaningful role on this committee. However, time constraints of both the parent and the principal made it difficult to accomplish this.

Enabling and Limiting Factors

The principals outlined some key factors they felt enabled their councils to be effective. When it came to identifying limiting factors, only one was mentioned.

Enabling factors. The council members were regarded as the main factors enabling the councils in their schools to be effective. The positive leadership shown by council chairpersons was cited as an exceptionally positive factor by one principal. Another referred to the fact that the council members liked to work with each other as a definite asset. Still another mentioned that the council members seemed to guide the discussions when issues that should be discussed in private were attempted to be brought forward. The member in question was quietly instructed of the proper time and place for that topic to be discussed. All principals indicated that the interest of the parents in the education of children and their cooperative attitudes were also major factors.

Several other enabling factors were listed by some principals. One felt that the fact that the school council had been in operation for many years allowed them to benefit from previous experiences. Many of the contentious items had been worked out and the mechanism was in place for the council to operate effectively. Still another referred to the willingness of the local trustee and central office staff to come and share information about current issues as crucial. Finally, making sure that there was a vision or direction given so that parents valuable time was not waste was stressed by one principal. This was illustrated when Art stated:

So they have to feel that they have a really important part and that what we are doing impacts on their community as a whole...that's the vision that goes with it. In terms of the commitment that we get from them, a lot has to do with matching people with the appropriate jobs. You get someone who really values their expertise in the area of bookkeeping, then that is the person you want doing your books.

Don also saw the fact that many of the school council members were parents who volunteered in the school on a frequent basis as a benefit. The benefit of this was pointed out when Don stated:

I think the other thing is that a lot of the people that are on the parent advisory council are in the school on a voluntary basis on other occasions as much as they can. So I will see them in the evening, but I will also see them during the day. They will have a good understanding of what is going on in the school, because they see it happening on a day to day basis. They are in the classrooms. They see the teacher working. They see the students working. They see some of the interactions that are taking place and they bring that knowledge back with them.

Limiting factors. Only one limiting factor was mentioned by a principal. This concerned the problems that the council had in dealing with a strong or influential parent who had his own single agenda.

Benefits Derived From School Councils

The improved communication that result from the existence of school councils produced the greatest number of benefits. To start with all of the principals felt that school councils helped them keep the community informed as to the happenings at their schools. As well as keeping parents informed, this avenue for communication flowed both ways with information from the parents and the community

coming back to the school. The principals saw three main benefits from this two-way communication.

The first advantage of this, as seen by the principals was that it provided the school - three principals felt that this also applied to the school board of trustees - with a sounding board to bounce new ideas and policies off of. In this way a school could "check out" the support that was present for either policy changes or new policies and make adjustments accordingly.

A second advantage of this two-way communication, as seen by three of the administrators was that it kept the parents informed about what was happening at the school. The opinion was expressed by two administrators that when the parents understood some of the problems faced by the school, they were more understanding of what the school was trying to do and the problems that the school had to deal with. Still another administrator felt that things just went better when the parents knew what was going on in the school.

The final advantage as seen as coming from this increase in two-way communication dealt with the information that the school received back about the parents and the community. One administrator felt that this made the school more understanding of the parents and what they were trying to do. Two administrators felt that this helped them to determine if the school was meeting the needs of their communities.

All five administrators mentioned that there was a benefit in having school councils receive information and give feedback on policies and programs used at the school. Four of the principals felt their schools had benefitted from having the councils look at and get community reaction to either new policies or policy changes. The fifth administrator had gone a step farther, he had invited council members to become members of the school's policy

committees. Another benefit mentioned was the support by school councils of the "Quest Program", a program used to promote self esteem at most of the schools. This support had helped to get teachers trained in the use of the program and to get parents to support the program by supplying support materials for the program.

There were a number of other benefits which are worthy of discussion. Most of the schools had "hot-lunch" programs sponsored and put on by the school councils. Helping in the construction of playground facilities by fund raising, organizing the projects, and providing labour was another area that was common for the councils to be involved in. Helping the school to obtain volunteers was still another benefit mentioned by two of the principals. Most of the councils were also involved in fund-raising activities to support school activities and some optional programs.

One of the administrators interviewed indicated that the school council at their school helped the school with the year-end evaluation. This was highlighted by Art's statement:

Sometimes it's really good to have someone who isn't a teacher and who isn't a student come into the school and share with you what it feels like to be here. It gives you an idea of what you need to work on. Our whole evaluation process in our school, we evaluate annually, is fed through our school council. We get a lot of feedback on what our priorities in our school ought to be based on the community needs.

The need for, and benefit of this, was referred to by two other administrators who felt that there was a need to get feedback from people who were not members of the staff to check the accuracy of the school's perceptions on certain issues. It was felt that this was needed to help the school ensure that it was meeting the needs of their parents and their community.

Principals' Perceptions on Future School Councils

The principals' perceptions of the future of school councils in Sturgeon are presented in eight categories. These include: (a) roles for school councils, (b) composition of school councils, (b) problems that these councils could encounter, (c) conditions that need to exist for these councils to be effective, (d) skills that school councils members need, (e) benefits that these councils could bring, (f) concerns about these councils and their effects, and (g) who should define the role for these councils.

Future Roles for School Councils

The principals did not see the school councils relinquishing any of their previous roles. The SCs would still provide an important communication channel to and liaison with the parents and the community. Two of the principals stated that they hoped that school councils would still maintain their advisory role. While the other three did not mention this advisory role and whether or not it would change, they did however foresee an increased role for future school councils. This would include having input on policies, programming and curriculum. They also thought that the school councils would be vital in helping the school to determine the needs of the community, set priorities based on these needs and in achieving these priorities. Don shared some of the guidelines that he saw for this involvement when he stated:

I don't see them involved in the day to day routine. I think that's my job and the teacher's job. But I do see them being involved in the organization. How do we set up? What we are aiming for? Giving us some ideas and some help in how we are going to achieve those things we are aiming for.

Composition

The five principals did not see the need for a drastic change in the composition of school councils. All saw the continuing importance of having parents, staff members and the administration on the council. Several mentioned the need to get a larger number of parents involved. The need to involve members of the community who did not have students attending the school was also stressed. However this was seen to have some difficulties associated with it. First, it is difficult to get already busy community members to attend. Second, if you ask certain groups to have representation on your council, groups that are not asked may be offended.

One administrator raised the possibility of trying to get senior citizens to sit on the council. They would know their communities well and have a broad base of experience to draw upon.

Problems and Concerns

Principals thought that with increased power will come increased responsibility which in turn will place added demands on the parents. One concern mentioned by all principals was that parents would need to devote more time to the new school councils. With the busy lifestyles that many parents have, this was seen as a problem by most of the principals. They also noted that this would lead to a problem with interest groups. Don indicated that a broad spectrum of parents are needed on SCs so that the community's feelings are expressed, not just the feelings of a small interest group. The principals interviewed speculated that it would be difficult to get this broad spectrum of parents if there was not a really important issue to deal with.

The need to get more parents involved with the school councils was associated with another problem by Bob when he stated:

Well I think it puts the principal in a real vulnerable position. If you are out trying to drum up support, you don't drum up support from people who are out to get you....it doesn't have to be the people who are supportive who are represented, but there has to be more representation. I don't know how the principal keeps from getting the label of stacking the committee?

Another concern brought forward by two principals is that if the new councils are to be effective, there will be a need to educate parents in collaborative decision making, leadership skills, and in budgetary processes. This will place even more demands on the parents already heavily sought after available time.

Still another concern expressed by Bud was that the provincial government might create legislation providing more power to the school councils than they want to assume. This could lead to conflict and grief among council members of councils in small communities where "everyone knew everyone else."

Don was concerned that any changes made would be made too quickly. He saw the need to bring school councils "along" slowly. This concern was made clear when he stated:

You can't tell parents, guess what? Now you are going to decide the priorities for the school and help me set the budget and staffing and program delivery when the biggest question you have asked them up until now is, should we have an outside day when it is raining out...It is not fair. It is not fair to them and it is not fair to the school. So I think that you are going to have to make some of those incremental steps.

Don also felt that this change would cause problems for some administrators, especially administrators who tend to run the school in a particular way. These principals are going to have to learn how to involve staff, community, parents and maybe even students in a collaborative decision process.

Art was concerned that a strong interest group might have an agenda that was not necessarily educationally sound. Art stressed this problem when he stated:

...the hiring and firing of the principal can be connected with that. The principal is your instructional leader in your school. With that goes the evaluation and processing of staff. I think that the most scary scenario is that in fact an administrator could become sufficiently intimidated or led by a parent group that they could be led away from educational concerns. It is a real balancing act.

Conditions That Need to Exist

There were a set of conditions that the principals felt needed to exist before school councils could operate effectively. The first of these, a point expressed by four of the principals, deals with the mandate under which these councils operate. They felt that the setting of a clear mandate for school councils started with provincial legislation that clearly defined the roles of the school council. This should be followed up by clear policies at the local school board level. This provincial legislation and district policies have to be flexible enough to permit the role of the school council to fit the needs of the community. This legislation also has to let communities that want more or less involvement have those options. After this, the local school council needs to have a clear constitution that is understood by its members. Once all these conditions are met, then a precise mandate needs to be set for the school councils and school council members need to understand and accept this mandate.

Three principals identified dealing with the willingness and skills of the administration to participate in the collaborative decision-making process as an important issue that needs to be addressed by school boards and the provincial government. The principal has to be willing to share both power and responsibility with the school council and be willing to reach decisions in a collaborative manner. It was felt that some administrators would need help in both changing their mind set to accept this and to develop the skills to facilitate this type of decision making.

A third area mentioned by three principals dealt with the need to educate parents regarding the realities of schools' fiscal and operational frameworks and to provide parents with all of the vital information on these matters. Don expressed this need by stating:

We're going to have to do some education as to what the school powers and responsibilities are. And the same thing for them, they are going to have to learn what they can do and can't do. They are going to have to learn the fiscal realities, how much a computer costs and how many minutes you are going to spend on Math. Also if you add more French its got to come from somewhere because the day doesn't get longer.

This process is seen as needing both time and effort spent addressing it.

Still another condition alluded to by one principal was the need for strong leadership from the chair of the school council. He foresaw some councils with many "strong" members on them resulting in a wide variety of ideas and agendas. It was felt that the leader would have to be able to "pull" these individuals together if an effective team was to be built.

The final condition that was raised dealt with the need to have school councils responsible for their decisions. Joe outlined his concerns in this area by stating:

I think that if you are going to have power to set rules or legislation, you would have to be elected at large. There has to be some ownership, if I am not elected I can shoot my mouth off, but if I am elected I am much like a trustee. I think that the trustees, because they are elected, have had to be accountable.

Important Skills

The set of skills that principals felt would help school council members to be effective were consistent among the five interviews. They started with good listening skills. Being able to hear what someone else has said even if you disagree with their point of view is vital. Another important skill was having the ability to see the good points in others' arguments and being able to consider those as alternatives to one's own point of view. The ability to work together with the group to bring the various points of view together and to reach a consensus was also cited as important. To do this it was felt that council members had to be able to look beyond the needs of their own children and consider the needs of all children within the school. These skills combined with some skills in general meeting protocol were seen as essential for effective school council members. Bud summed up this need by stating the following:

They better be able to communicate effectively, I think that you have to be able to put your point of view forward. I think that you have to be a representative of the people in terms of being a listener to what is going on out there. Bringing those points of view forward as advice and being able to debate those points of view. I guess being able to cooperate with others and knowing how to work together as a group recognizing that your opinion is only one of many and may not necessarily be the one that makes the final decision. I guess that it's largely human skills.

Perceived Benefits

The responses regarding perceived benefits of future school councils were similar to the benefits attributed to present school councils. The myriad of benefits attached to having another very effective communications link between the school and parents and community would be, if any thing, enhanced in the new school councils.

Each of the principals did come up with at least one additional or radically different benefit between the present school councils and future school councils. Bud felt that the wider scope of the representation on the council would give the school a better concept of the total expectations of the community for the school. He also saw this as an advantage when schools deal with the provincial government or the department of education to obtain resources. This is illustrated by Bud's statement that:

I know politically government listens pretty closely to grass roots sorts of things. You are hearing things from school councils and very similar things from the parents and you will have to listen to them. They aren't just one or two sorts of red-neck parents that may be trying to state their opinion. I guess any time you can work to facilitate any kind of communication and make it stronger and better it has to be positive for all parties involved, for the board, for the departments, for parents, kids and staff.

The establishment of strengthened relationships between the parents and staff was seen as an added benefit by Joe. Improved relationships between parents and staff are seen as good both for public relations and in helping the schools to deliver better programs.

Bob felt that the added input of parents and the community would have a positive effect on education. This additional input should lead to better decision making at both the school and the district levels.

A better understanding by parents of the parameters in which the school has to work was seen as a benefit by Don. This was pointed out when he stated:

I think for the future councils, one of the things that will be kind of neat is that I think parents, as community members, will have a better understanding as to the limit of our resources. A lot of times parents say, "Why don't you do this, why don't you do that?" We say that we are trying but there is a limit on the dollars, there is a limit on the hours.

As parents work in and with the school they will come to understand these parameters and the efforts being made by staff on behalf of the students' education.

Art anticipated that the changes in the roles of school councils would help parents assume more responsibility for the education of their children. He felt that parents are ultimately responsible for the education of their children. Consequently SCs would provide an avenue for and encourage parents to play a larger role in the education of their children.

Who Should Determine the Role of School Councils

The data collected from all five principals were consistent on this topic. The province needs to set some broad guidelines in this area. The roles of school councils and the responsibilities assumed by them should be set at the local level. This should be done collaboratively by involving the school, parents from that school, the school council, and the trustees. Don expressed the feeling directly that the others alluded to. This was that it is not the responsibility of the province to determine the role of the school councils. This should be left to the locally elected officials and their electorate. Art felt that the province's obligation is, "to make sure that radical

interests are not leading the educational system down the wrong path."

Bob seemed to sum up the general perspective in this area when asked who should set the roles for school councils in Sturgeon, he stated:

Well Sturgeon should, but I don't know if they are going to get a chance to. I think that it would be a great exercise for the present school committee chairmen, the administration and the principals to sit down and say, "What are some of the roles" and try to hammer out a description between those three groups. Central office administration, school level administration and people that are already on school councils. But I don't think that's there.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis of The Data

Introduction

This chapter looks at the data collected from the two groups of respondents. The data is compared and contrasted in order to answer some of the main research questions. This is followed by a section which analyzes the data in light of the literature.

Present School Councils

The data presented by the school councils members and principals on present school councils will be compared and contrasted as answers are provided for the research questions. This will be done for the categories of: (a) present roles of school councils, (b) problems encountered by councils in setting up or operating, (c) factors enabling or limiting the effectiveness of the councils, and (d) benefits derived from the existence of these councils.

Present Roles of School Councils

In this section the question about the functions currently fulfilled by school councils is addressed. While there were a variety of functions undertaken by school councils, communication was seen as the main function of the present school councils.

The data collected from the school council members and the principals gave a very consistent picture of the roles currently fulfilled by the school councils in Sturgeon School Division. All of the people interviewed viewed the most important role played by present councils as that of communications facilitator among parents, the community, and

the school. The councils act as a liaison expediting the two-way flow of communications between the school and the community. This was seen as a crucial role which benefitted all parties.

There was also nearly unanimous agreement on the other roles played by the present school councils. Most people interviewed saw the school councils acting as a "sounding board" for the school and in a limited number of interviews for the board of trustees. This allowed these groups to get the council members' and in some cases the parents' feedback on proposed school policies and activities. In one case this feedback came from council members who sat on various school committees that set policies for the school. Still other roles that councils generally fulfil in Sturgeon include: (a) fund raising, (b) running special activities like the hot lunch program, and (c) through volunteers, assisting the schools in enriching the learning experiences made available to the students.

Problems Encountered

This section deals with the research questions on problems encountered in either establishing or operating school councils. The concerns that arose here include: (a) obtaining adequate membership, (b) lack of information, and (c) inservicing for school council members.

Both of the groups, the council members and the principals, felt that their councils had experienced little in the way of problems either in setting up or in operating. Of the problems mentioned, getting parents either to be on the school council or to attend meetings seemed to be the main problems. The feeling was generally expressed that basically the same core of parents supported the councils and volunteered in the schools. This only seemed to change if an issue of special concern arose, and often this was negative. Busy lifestyles were felt to be the main cause of

this problem of getting parents involved as school council members and it was felt that the severity of the problem increased as the students moved through the grades.

There were two other problems mentioned, each by a single interviewee. A council member felt that the lack of information on the school's long term goals forced the council to run from "year to year". This meant that the council had to refocus each year and the council member thought that this lack of direction may have negatively affected the number of parents willing to volunteer to be on the school council. The other problem, expressed by a principal, dealt with the information and expertise needed by school council members before they could play a meaningful role in helping to set the school budget. With both parents and staff seeming to be busier than ever, it was hard to find the time for this.

Enabling and Limiting Factors

The responses to the research question on the enabling or limiting factors that had an influence on the effectiveness of school councils showed up the first differences in perspectives between the school council members' group and the principals' group. However, these differences in enabling and limiting factors reflect the different groups as much as any difference in position between the two groups. Both the council members and the principals saw members of the other group as being capable of helping a council or hindering it.

Enabling factors. The factors or conditions seen as enabling school councils all dealt with the human factor. While most of the school council members felt that the positive attitude of the principal and the staff were the single most important factor that enabled their councils to be effective, the principals felt the same way about their

council chairs and the council members. This, it was felt, was a necessary factor to have in existence if the needed exchange of information was to occur and for the councils to have a meaningful role.

Council members also felt that having staff members attend the council meetings and present to the council on the programs or projects which they were working on was helpful. To start with, this kept the council up to date on the various programs running in the school and gave the school council members important information about those programs. This set the stage for building good working relationships between those staff members and the school council members. While principals did not mention this as an enabling factor, most did see this as a benefit of having school councils operate.

The one topic which was noted by some members of both groups as enabling the effectiveness of school councils was the willingness of their school board trustee to attend council meetings and to report at those meetings. In this way the council was kept abreast of happenings at the school board level, had a source of information to answer some of their questions and were available if feedback was needed by the trustee.

Limiting factors. In terms of limiting factors, the differences seemed to be highly related to the groups and their roles. Some of the school council members saw two main limiting factors that could limit or had limited the effectiveness of their school councils. The first of these was the principal and his vital role in this area. The council members viewed the whole operation of the council and its roles as being principal dependent. The council typically had a meaningful and beneficial role to play if it had a principal who was receptive to school councils. If, however, the principal wasn't receptive to the notion of

school councils the council would not have a meaningful role to play in the school, and this became awkward. It was expressed by one council member that efforts to rectify a problem such as this would probably damage the very "team-like" atmosphere that schools and school councils are trying to build.

The other limiting factor mentioned by council members was a lack in clarity of the actual roles of school councils. If councils were to play a meaningful role and have some continuity from year to year, it was felt that their roles needed to be clearly defined.

The principals saw only one factor existing that could limit the effectiveness of their councils. Sometimes council members had agendas which were strictly their own and did not reflect the feelings of the group as a whole or the interests of all of the students. These incidents can be sensitive to deal with and can cause concerns for school councils.

Benefits Obtained From Present School Councils

In this section the question on the benefits of present school councils is dealt with. The benefits were seen to include: (a) improved communication, (b) involvement of adults other than teachers in education, and (c) additional activities and programs run by school councils.

The two groups, school councils members and principals, felt that the most essential benefit that school councils produced was a result of the communication between the parents or community and the school or the board facilitated by these councils. The better understanding of the concerns, problems and feelings of each of these stakeholder groups by the other groups helped to build an atmosphere that helped to produce the best school experiences for the students. Also the added input that this communication

gave, helped to provide better quality decision making at both the school and the district levels.

While some school council members and some principals saw the fact that there were other adults in the school, other than staff members as a benefit, they saw the benefits generated by this action differently. The council members saw this as important because the students needed to see other adults besides teachers in the school. They felt that this would help stress the importance of education to the students. Several principals saw this as important because it gave the school a chance to get different perspectives, not the one from people who were involved on an on going basis, on the effectiveness of some of the established routines.

The special activities, additional programs and functions such as hot lunches were seen, and appreciated, as important benefits of school councils. These, so called "extras" were seen as helping to make the schools better places for all to be.

Perceptions on the Future of School Councils

In this section the data collected from interviews with the five school council members and the five principals on their perceptions of the future of school councils are compared and contrasted as answers to the research questions on perceptions about future school councils are answered. This is done under the categories of: (a) roles for school councils, (b) composition of school councils, (c) problems and concerns for and about these councils, (d) conditions that need to exist for these councils to be effective, (e) skills that school council members need, (f) benefits that these councils could have, and (g) who should define the roles for these councils.

Perceived Roles for School Councils

In answering the question about the perceived future role for school councils in Sturgeon, all interviewees saw that the functions currently being fulfilled would remain as part of the role of school councils. However, despite the need to retain the present functions, they all saw that some changes to the role fulfilled by school councils were inevitable.

While all of the interviewees saw that the role of the school councils would have to be made more meaningful by involving school councils in the setting of school level policies, setting of the school budget, and determining the direction that some school programs took, the degree to which the councils should be involved varied. All of the principals and three of the school council members saw this role as an advisory one. One council member saw this role expanding to the extent that the council would make many of the decisions affecting the delivery of education in the local school, although this would be done after obtaining school board approval. The other member saw the role of the council growing in much the same way, but the council would have the final say on these decisions. All members saw the councils involved in setting policies, budgets, goals and philosophies, but not in the day to day running of the schools.

Members of both groups saw these new councils playing a strategic role in facilitating communications among the stakeholder groups. Both facilitating and encouraging this two-way flow of communications was seen as crucial if the "best" decisions were to be made about the education of the students. This would help the needs and concerns of all groups to be known and the expertise of all groups could be utilized in making these decisions.

School council members, to varying degrees, saw involvement in staffing as another function that school

councils should be involved in. Most councils members felt that the councils should have some definite input on the selection of principals for their school. They saw the role of the principal as the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of their council and felt that allowing the council to have input would help to ensure that principals would be willing to work with their councils. While only one council member saw school councils playing the same role with respect to the hiring of teaching staff, most expressed the view that when ongoing problems with a staff member arose, the council should have some avenue to ensure that their input was important and that the issue was dealt with.

Composition

The answer to the question about the perceived composition of future school councils had two main points. These were: (a) retaining the present membership, and (b) adding more representation from the teaching staff and the community.

The continuation of all groups presently on the councils was seen for future councils by most interviewees. Parents, staff and administration were all seen as integral and vital parts of school councils. However the area of staff participation was seen as the one strand of the existing players that did need to be expanded. While the need to expand the scope of the representation to include community members was generally agreed upon, this did raise some additional concerns. All of the administrators and several of the council members felt that getting consistent representation from community groups, whose members are already taxed to the limit as far as time commitments, would be difficult. Two council members expressed another concern about the involvement of community representatives. They felt that if this was done, care would have to be taken to

make sure that the education of the students remained the priority for the school. One member felt that the lines of communications were good enough to ensure more than adequate communications already occurred and there was no need to improve it by having community representatives who actually sat as members of the school council.

Trustees were seen as another important component of school councils. While they tend to be non-voting members, they do provide an essential link between the school council and the school board. The information that they bring to the council on board initiatives is vital.

Problems and Concerns

In the area of potential problems and concerns about the future roles that school councils may fulfil, school council members and principals raises three main concerns. These included: (a) problems securing adequate membership, (b) need for present authorities to be willing to share the power, and (c) special interest groups.

The main problems foreseen for school councils by both council members and principals were in the area of the membership of the councils. Both groups felt that it would be increasingly difficult to get parents involved in school councils for a number of reasons. The first reason was that as peoples lives get busier and busier, it will be harder to get people to commit the time needed to be effective council members. It was felt that if school councils are to play a more meaningful role in the education of children, it will demand an even larger time commitment-further complicating this problem. The concern was expressed that some parents would not want to have the added responsibilities that an increased role for school councils could bring. Even those parents who do want to see the role of school councils increased, and are willing to participate, will need to be educated in some of the procedures, such as budgetary

procedures, adding an even further to the time demands on them.

Another concern expressed by some council members was that even if you could find parents willing to commit the time needed to fill the roles of a school council that was playing a more meaningful role, it may be difficult to convince school boards and some principals to give up some of their authority to make this possible. This was seen as a problem that would need to be worked out if councils' roles were to be increased.

The final significant concern, one which was expressed by some members of both council members and principals, was the role that strong interest groups might play on these future councils. The fear was expressed that these groups might either influence or even force schools to spend time and energies on areas which were not related to the educational priorities that a school should have.

Conditions That Need to Exist

In response to the questions on conditions that needed to exist if school councils were to fulfil the role perceived for them, school council members and principals suggested six conditions. These included: (a) a clear mandate, (b) a meaningful role, (c) access to pertinent information, (d) positive attitudes by principals, (e) inservices for new council members, and (f) accountability of school councils.

The one area on which there was some agreement, four principals and two council members, dealt with the need for the mandate of the councils to be clearly set. In general, this was seen as being accomplished by having some "umbrella" type legislation at the provincial level with the specifics of the role to be played by the councils to be set at the school and district levels.

The other conditions that it was felt were needed for councils to fulfil a meaningful role and to be effective were seen differently by each group. School council members had two further conditions that they felt would have to be met if future school councils were to succeed. To start with the council members felt that the role of the councils would have to be made meaningful if they were to continue to attract parents who were willing to sit on them. They felt that lifestyles led by most parents were getting busier and if parents were to find time to sit on school councils, it would only be because they felt that they could make a difference in the education that their children received. The other condition that the council members felt would have to be met is that they would have to have access to more information. This information would take the form of short and long term goals for both the school and the district and specifics about things like the budgetary process.

The principals interviewed identified three conditions that they felt would have to be met for school councils to be successful. The first of these was that administrators in general, and more specifically principals, would have to be willing to work with school councils. The second condition was that there would have to be provisions made to educate the council members on the realities of the decisions made at the school level. These realities include budgetary guidelines, costs of running school programs, and department of education guidelines as to setting time limits etc. on the various programs and courses taught in the school. The final condition that the principals saw as necessary is the need to make sure that the councils are accountable. Accountability of school council members could be addressed by having them elected to the positions.

Skills That Would Benefit School Council Members

In this section the answers given to the question regarding the types of skills which were important for school council members to possess if they were to be effective are analyzed. The principals and school council members felt that there were two main skills that were important. These were: (a) communication skills and (b) the ability to work as part of a group. However, most of the council members felt that is essential for people to be genuinely interested in children and education before anything else if they are to be good school council members.

Two main skills were identified by council members and principals that would be extremely beneficial for school council members to possess. The first of these is the ability to communicate well. In particular the ability to: express opinions clearly so others are able to understand the point of view, and being able to listen to what others have said and to convey these feelings back to the other council members. The second group of skills identified were related to working with groups. Added to this being willing to work together to reach some sort of consensus and being able to take constructive criticism are important.

Most of the councils members felt the even before considering the skills listed above, there is one element that is crucial if a person is going to be a good school council member. They felt that it is essential that a person be genuinely interested in children and education before anything else. If this condition is met, then the other skills become important.

Perceived Benefits of Future School Councils

In answer to the research question of the perceived benefits of future school councils, school council members and principals outlined four benefits that they felt would occur. These included: (a) communications, (b) increased

parental involvement in schools, (c) wider ownership of the schools, and (d) empowerment of schools.

There was general agreement between school council members and principals regarding the benefits that would be realized if school councils are allowed to fulfil the roles perceived for them. These benefits lay in four main areas. The first area dealt with the extension of the benefits already enjoyed because of the existence of school councils and the communications that they facilitate. Facilitating communications between the school and the community is seen as the most important benefit provided by school councils.

The second benefit identified by some council members and principals is that the school councils provides an avenue for parents to get more involved in the education of their children. The opinion was expressed both by some council members and some principals that parents are ultimately responsible for the education of their children. It was felt that school councils provided parents with opportunities to do this and encouraged other parents to become more involved in the education of their children.

The third benefit that both school council members and principals spoke of was the increased ownership that the council members would feel as they became more involved in their schools. One principal saw the added benefit of having parents develop a better understanding of the parameters with in which the schools had to operate. This was seen as adding up to an increased level of understanding between the school and the parents.

The final benefits resulting from school councils was in empowering principals and the schools. The council members felt that having policies set by or endorsed by the school council would give principals more authority while they were enforcing these policies. One principal saw that having school councils who shared the same concerns as the parents at large would carry more weight when both parents

and councils dealt with the department of education and the provincial government.

School council members also felt that having more adults involved in the school would help provide the students with the opportunity to be exposed to a wider range of experiences. Also there was a perceived benefit of having the students see other adults besides teachers actively involved in the schools. It was felt that this would stress the importance of education to students if other adults were willing to take time to be involved in education.

Principals saw stronger relations developing between staff and parents due to staff members sharing information about programs with parents. They also saw the extra sources of input on school based decisions as important in helping ensure that better decisions were made at the school level.

Who Should Determine the Role of School Councils

In answering the final question on who should set the roles for school councils, two ingredients were seen as essential. These included: (a) the need for provincial government legislation and (b) the involvement of local stakeholders.

The comments collected from council members and principals regarding who should determine the roles of school councils were very similar. Essentially everyone agreed that the role for school councils and their assumed responsibilities should be set at the local level. Two of the council members and all of the principals believed that the first step in accomplishing this was to have general provincial legislation enacted specifying the nature of local control. Then the school council for each school, the school level administration and the board of trustees or their designate should sit down and try to come to some

consensus as to the council's role for that school. The feeling was expressed that responsibility to set roles for local school councils is not within the provincial realm. This responsibility should be left to the locally elected officials and their electorate.

Implications of the Literature For This Study

Introduction

The literature has some definite implications for the findings of this study. However, this does not mean that there are areas where the literature should be used as a prescription to follow as work with school councils is done in Sturgeon School Division. These implications are more food for thought or items which merit careful consideration before action is taken in Sturgeon. The areas in which these implications occur are: (a) the role of school councils, (b) parent participation on school councils, (c) lines of communications, (d) the mandate of school councils, (e) ownership, (f) support for the council, and (g) role of the principal.

Roles For School Councils

Throughout the literature a reoccurring theme is the need for the role of school or parent councils to be significant and for their efforts to make a difference in the education that the students receive. This is essential if parent councils are to be effective. This belief is expressed by Lyons et al. (1982), Hansen and Marburger (1989), and Seely (1985) in their writings. This strongly supports the opinions expressed by the interviewees in this study. Both the principals' group and the school council members' group saw a need for the school councils to play a meaningful role in decisions made in their local schools. The areas of school climate, discipline, and school policies

were seen as important for parental involvement through the school councils.

Parental Participation

Being an effective member of a school council requires the commitment of a substantial amount of time on the participants' part. For school councils to be effective its members must be willing to make this commitment over an extended period of time and on a regular basis. Hess and Easton (1991) found that lack of continuity in attendance of members from meeting to meeting was certainly a limiting factor of the effectiveness of school councils in Chicago. They also found that this increased the frustration level of the other participants. This study found that one of the problems already encountered by school councils and a concern for future school councils is this increasing demand for time from parents. This has already caused some councils to have problems getting good representation and is seen as being an even greater problem in the future. The time commitment required of parents will have to be considered when future roles are set for school councils.

Communication

Establishing and maintaining effective lines of communications were seen as essential in both of the studies done by Easton et al. (1993) on school councils in Chicago and Gamage (1994) on school councils in Australia. In the Chicago study on types of school councils done by Bennett et al. (1992), in the excessive-governance type of LSCs the flow of communications was poor and this lead to inefficient school councils. These LSCs tended to be ineffective and they operated in an antagonistic atmosphere. In the present study, I found that good communication was seen as both a benefit of school councils and as essential for school councils to be effective. With the importance of

communication so clearly indicated by the responses given during the interviews as well as in the literature reviewed, this is clearly a key area to plan for. As school councils are operated in Sturgeon, the effectiveness of the lines of communications should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. This is without doubt one area that can either enhance or severely limit the effectiveness of school councils. I see the need for all concerned to carefully study what is needed to insure that good communications exist and if possible entrench guidelines to guarantee that these needs are met in the school councils' constitution.

Ownership

The literature highlighted both the importance of getting parent participants, school staff, and administration to take ownership of the educational happenings in their schools as well as the benefits that accompanied these happenings. Barth (1990) and Hewitson (1985) both saw the need to get parents involved in the educational process and to get parents to take more responsibility for the education of their children. The literature on site-based management by Neap (1991) and Brown (1990) outlined one of the benefits of having parents participate in collaborative decision making in their local schools as the feelings of ownership that they developed towards the school and its endeavours. The present study indicated that the interviewees felt the need to get more parents involved in the education of their children so that they could assume ultimate responsibility for their children's education. School councils are seen as a avenue for parents to do this.

Mandate of School Councils

Marsh (1988) writes about the period in Australia between the initial legislation on school councils and the amendments which clarified the roles of school councils in 1983 as a time of frustration for both school councils and principals. During this time different interest groups competed for power and school councils had little if any positive affect on education. After the amendments of 1983, Gamage (1994) found that those involved with school councils had a more positive attitude towards both school councils and their effectiveness. If school council members, school-based administrators, school staff and trustees are to work out roles for the various school councils in Sturgeon, care must be taken to ensure that the mandate of each council is clearly defined. If this is not done the chance of conflict occurring will be maximized while the effectiveness of these councils will be minimized.

Support For School Councils

If school councils are to be effective, help must be given to enable the participants to be effective council members. School council members need to be able to communicate well, work as part of a team and have access to relevant background information regarding their schools. This is emphasized by Neap (1991) as well as by Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) when they talk about the empowerment of school councils and the support given to LSC members in Chicago respectively. Steps to provide this same kind of support to school council members in Sturgeon should be looked into. Both the local school board and the department of education need to work together to make the necessary training available to help parents become effective school council members.

Role of the Principal

The final area that I will look at in which the literature has implications for the implementation of the findings of this study is the role of the principal. Throughout the work on site-based management by Brown (1990) and Neap (1991), the look at school councils in Australia by Gamage (1993), and the reports on the LSCs in Chicago by Hess (1993) and Bennett et al. (1992), the role of the principal is seen as crucial in making school councils effective. The perceptions gathered from the school council members interviewed in this study reflected this same feeling. Principals and their attitudes can either enable or limit the effectiveness of a school council. This implies a need for this to be considered when either planning for the training of principals in the future or in selecting a principal for a school. Principals are going to need skills in leading collaborative decision making, conflict resolution, and team building as well as others. I feel that it is crucial that these areas be addressed in training provided to present principals. The responsibility to insure that this happens rests with the local school boards, the department of education, and with the principals.

CHAPTER 6

Themes, Implications and Recommendations

In chapter six the important findings that in this study and their implications for the future are presented. First, the themes highlight the main features of the data collected from the school council members and principals. Second, in the recommendations, the findings and implications are tied together in a brief plan.

Themes

Introduction

A number of themes emerged as the data collected from the school councils members and principals were compiled, sorted, grouped, and then compiled, compared and contrasted. In this section these important themes and related information will be presented. The emergent themes include: (a) communications (b) a meaningful role, (c) who should set the role, (d) why have school councils, (e) the critical factor and (f) concerns. However, before this synthesis is presented it is important to reset the stage by reviewing the current context in Sturgeon School Division with respect to school councils.

Sturgeon School Division has a policy in effect which supports and strongly encourages the establishment of school councils. The effects of this policy are evident as school councils exist in all Sturgeon Schools. These councils meet regularly and have a membership consisting of parents, administration, in many cases other staff members and in a few cases other community members. For the most part these councils are very active in helping the schools to broaden the educational experiences and related activities made available to the students.

The themes that emerged tie together both present happenings and perceptions for the future. Also, unless other wise stated, they combine the opinions expressed by members of both groups interviewed. While all themes are presented together here, there are four themes which seem to stand out. These are: (a) the importance of communications, (b) a meaningful role for school councils, (c) who should decide on the role for school councils, and (d) why school councils are needed. The data from which these themes emerged were consistently presented by most of the council members and principals.

Communication

Communication and its importance was given more attention by all the interviewees than any other issue. Whether the emphasis was on roles of school councils or benefits derived from the existence of school councils, communication was considered to be the single most important aspect to be discussed. Good communication along with well established lines of communication are seen as essential if school councils are to be successful in the future.

When considering either present roles of school councils or perceptions about the future roles for school councils communication was stressed. School councils are looked on as providing a vital communication link between the home and the school or, more specifically, between educators and parents. Councils facilitate the two-way flow of information between home and school. In school councils the school has a sounding board which also feeds vital information on parents feelings and needs back to them. Councils also provide a "pipeline" to help get schools' perspectives on various issues and programs out to the community. This communication link provided a wide variety of benefits to all stakeholders. To begin with it provided a forum in which teachers and schools could present

information on programs, policies, or activities to parents. In addition to helping schools disseminate information, both the principals and SC members perceived that councils also expedite the building of good relations between staff and parents.

Another crucial benefit occurs when input is sought from the councils and then used in formulating school policies. There are three benefits that can be realized if policies are brought back to school councils for further scrutiny and adjustment before they are put into effect. First, as the variety of the sources of input are increased, more perspectives are considered before final decisions are made regarding new or revised policies: this should improve the quality of the decisions made. Second, as school council members have had input into the decisions and have reacted to the policies before hand, policies will more likely be supported by councils and they will help to sell these policies to other parents. This should help new or revised policies to gain wider support in the local community. Third, the main benefit realized is the empowerment of the school and principal. Having policies which are supported by the school council should increase the informal power of principals as they and their staffs implement these policies.

The final benefit realized from improved communication addresses parents or guardians who are reluctant to approach school personnel. These people often have concerns about certain happenings at the school or aspects of the schools' policies or programs and are reluctant to speak to the school personnel responsible. There are several ways in which school council members can help to provide solutions for this problem. In some cases they encourage the concerned parent to come to see the appropriate school personnel or they may even bring the person to the school and introduce them to the school staff. In other cases SCs

members may relay any concern to the principal who can then take steps to encourage the parent to discuss the perceived problems. In other cases the concerns may be raised anonymously so that school staff members are aware that a problem may exist. Then school staff can watch for further concerns and take steps to rectify them.

A Meaningful Role

The second major theme that emerged deals with the role that should be played by school councils. While opinions on the amount of authority that school councils should have ranged from strictly advisory to acting as mini school boards, there was complete agreement on certain aspects of the role. The role of school councils is seen as increasing in the future and all interviewees stressed that the role must be meaningful. SC members felt that they should be consulted on and give advice on school based policies. However, the SC members interviewed referred to the busy lifestyles that they perceive are becoming common in today's society, making time a precious commodity. If the participants in the school councils don't see their expenditure of time as being meaningful and beneficial to the education of children, they won't be willing to continue to expend the time and effort required by this commitment.

The specific areas which the perceived roles of school councils were seen as encompassing included involvement in the formulating of policies for the local school, helping to set school goals, helping to develop school philosophy and input on school programs. The day to day running of the schools and methods for reaching schools' educational goals were seen as falling to the educators. Having input into the selection of the principal was the final area which SC members perceived as being part of the role school councils should fill. Principals have an enormous effect on schools' climate and culture. The working relationship that exists

between school council members (both parent and school staff) and their administration is seen as crucial to the functioning of the school. Therefore the school community should be able to help set criteria that they feel is important and to be part of the selection team when a principal is being selected for a school.

Who Should Set The Roles For the School Councils

Determining who should be responsible for determining the role to be played by a school council was the third major theme that emerged in this study. There was a strong feeling that each school had a unique identity and should be treated as such. Under the guidelines of provincial legislation on "Roles and Responsibilities of School Councils", local determination of roles to be played by school councils should be allowed.

The legislation could set parameters for school councils and should ensure that councils who do want to be meaningfully involved are guaranteed that right. However, the extent of the involvement should be set by the school council, the school administration, and the local school board. Within limits, school councils should not be forced to take on roles which they do not want to assume or be excluded from roles which would they would be willing to undertake. The limits would be the parameters set by the provincial legislation or special conditions that exist with in the school district or division.

Why School Councils Are Necessary

The fourth main theme that emerged from the data analysis dealt with reasons that make school councils not only beneficial, but also essential. This theme emerged relative to both present and perceived future roles and benefits of school councils. The message that education is a priority and all steps must be taken to raise the quality

of the educational experiences and opportunities offered by our schools to the highest possible level kept resurfacing. School councils were seen by principals and school council members as having an important role to play in this endeavour.

School council members felt that for children to optimize the benefits that they obtain from their educational experiences, their parents or guardians must be involved. Having parents involved either individually with their own children or with the education process in general through the various forms of voluntarism, is important. It can help to motivate the students, stimulate the students, expand the range of experiences available to the students or raise the level of esteem in which education is held by students. It is important for both the schools and students to have adults other than educators involved actively in schools. School councils provide an avenue for this involvement.

In light of the times, which are both economically trying and extremely competitive, demands are growing to produce a higher quality of education using limited resources. Using the school council's pool of talent and knowledge about the local community can help schools meet this challenge. Whether it is the volunteers that can be organized by the council, the local expertise that can be accessed through the council or the local resources that council members can help make available, the councils have an important role to play.

The final reason, that was raised by this study supporting the need for school councils deals with the area of empowerment that can come to schools and principals through the councils. There are a variety of ways in which schools can be empowered by their councils to deal with some of the currently pressing issues which they face. Having the input and support of their councils, and then having the

council members act as ambassadors "selling" school policies and programs to the local community is invaluable. The level of understanding of and support for the school in the community can be raised in this way. When issues are being dealt with by politicians, the voices of the councils, representing parents, educators and community members should carry more weight and will probably merit more consideration. The support for policies aimed at providing a safe and stimulating environment in which students learn should have a wider base of support.

The Critical Factor

One critical factor will be considered when looking at school councils in Sturgeon School Division to ensure that they play an integral role in the education of students will be considered. Whether school councils are enabled or limited in the roles they play depends on how the dynamics of the "human factor" are worked out. The "human factor" includes the principal, the staff, and school council members and what type of working relationship they are able to establish. The analysis of the data collected for this study suggest that nothing has enabled councils more in the past or has the potential to limit councils more in the future than this factor.

If this critical factor has one part that is seen as having a more important role than others, that role belongs to the principal. As shown in the study of the school councils in Chicago by Easton et al (1993), councils set up under the same guidelines can still operate in radically different manners and have nearly opposite styles of operations. School councils can be collaborative team-style decision making bodies or arenas where conflict and mistrust are fostered. One of the key factors in these differences is related to the principals and their attitudes. Principals have control over the school office which can facilitate

communication between the various stakeholder groups such as staff, parents, and central office staff. Principals also have the most direct lines of communications with other parents, teachers and trustees, and usually principals have opportunity for a higher frequency of communications with each of the other stakeholder groups than do council members, staff members or board members. Also principals, through their action can facilitate the sharing of authority and through their actions can encourage others to participate in the collaborative decision-making process.

The other stakeholders, parents, trustees and other staff members, are the rest of this critical "human factor". Their attitudes and actions also go a long way in setting the tone for school councils. For school councils to be effective parents, teachers, and trustees have to support the philosophy of shared decision making and the method of management that accompanies it. They have to share a common determination that this is the way they want to operate their schools and they have to do everything possible to ensure that councils succeed. They, in conjunction with the school administration have to set the roles for the school councils. Then as a team of equals, they can continue on with the task of providing the best possible education to their students.

Concerns

The final theme group that emerged was a menagerie of concerns about school councils and their operation. These were not reasons why school councils should be avoided, but rather areas to be watched and, where possible, either dealt with or planned for. There were five different concerns that fell into this area.

The first concern dealt with obtaining a membership which is sufficient in size to both be representative of the parents in the community and to have enough members to share

the work load associated with the operation of a school council. If school councils are to play a more meaningful role in education in their local school, one of the costs is an increase in the time demands placed on its members. School council members will have to take time to assimilate background information and knowledge about the mechanics of policies and procedures. The SC members will also have to take the time to accumulate the skills needed to be active and productive participants in the collaborative decision-making process. In addition to these time demands, the need to spend even more time by school council members to establish their roles is emphasized. Either too limited a role, which prohibits council members involvement in crucial areas, or too extensive a role, which puts unrealistic time demands on the volunteers could lead to a backlash which would limit the councils effectiveness and reduce parent participation. A happy median must be found as continuity in membership of council members is vital when important decisions are being made over a period of time.

The second area of concern lies in the need to provide support for school councils. Access to pertinent information, good lines of communication and in some cases training will be needed as councils accumulate the knowledge and skills needed to make quality decisions. Help will be needed to ensure that all councils have access to this support.

The role of the councils is the third area of concern. Somehow a way of locally setting this role has to be worked out and accepted by the stakeholders. Not only must this process have the capacity of giving the local stakeholders the flexibility to determine the extent of each council's role, it also must produce a clear picture of the exact roles for each council that all stakeholders understand.

A fourth concern is the fear of the effects of special interest groups. This is a concern which exists as part of

the democratic process when the size of the population involved is relatively small. The possibility of an interest group running a school council becomes a distinct possibility if the level of involvement of other parents drops to too low a level. However if we believe in the democratic process, it is a chance that must be taken.

The final area, the perception that school councils' success or failure seems to be so principal dependent is a real concern. One of the side effects of school councils is site-base management and using the collaborative decision-making process. This has implications for principals and their management styles. As the roles played by school councils expand, so does the role of the principal. This has ramifications for the training of school based administrators and their selection if they are to operate effectively in the collaborative decision process that working with school councils requires.

Recommendations

School councils are perceived to have played a very significant role in most Sturgeon Schools in the past. This needs to continue in the future to ensure that students in Sturgeon School Division continue to be offered the best possible education. While there is not a single role description that will meet the needs in all schools, there is one condition that must be met by the role descriptions set for every school in Sturgeon. The role must be meaningful. Meaningful roles for each of the school councils must be developed by the stakeholder groups connected with that school.

While this study concentrated on the input of principals and school council members, there are other stakeholder groups which should be included. Other parents, school staff members, trustees, community members and where applicable students should be included in the process. Also

care needs be taken to proceed with any changes in a carefully planned and methodical manner. For some schools this venture could constitute what Fullan (1991) calls a second order change. In some situations the way in which policy related decisions are made and the operating culture of the school may change fairly drastically. Careful planning, dynamic methods of reviewing the needs of the school and the affects of changes, and implementation should help avoid some of the negative politics caused by many changes. Fullan describes negative politics as follows:

Negative politics from below means constantly resisting changes; from above it means attempting to impose reform through fiat. These negative modes are understandable given that changes are not normally introduced with much sensitivity and that there is little time to be considerate. The result is a decidedly negative vicious cycle. Resisting, cajoling, blaming others. self-protection, avoidance, and caution all become habitual strategies for coping. (p. 347)

The following is a general outline involving three phases that I feel could be used as roles for school councils in Sturgeon are either reviewed or set for the various schools.

Phase I

Using Fullan's (1991) phases as a guide, I would have phase I include: (a) organizing to study the role of the school councils (b) analyzing the need for changes in any, (c) collecting input from the various stakeholder groups, (d) developing the proposed role for the school council, and (e) checking to see if this proposed role meets the expectations of the various stakeholder groups.

As the above steps are carried out there are some crucial points to keep in mind. First of all, it is critical to involve members of the various stakeholder groups right from the start and excellent lines of

communications have to be established to keep information flowing throughout the process. Second, an effort needs to be made to get input from both stakeholder groups and the individuals from within the various groups. Third, as the input from the various groups is being considered, the current realities with regard to provincial legislation and board policies must be kept in mind and worked within. Fourth, if change is being considered it is important that once the new roles are formulated, they be circulated to the various stakeholder groups for feedback. Once this has been done and necessary adjustments made, then the roles for school councils can be promoted with the various stakeholder groups.

Phase II

Phase II is referred to by Fullan (1991) as the implementation stage. The steps that I would include in this stage are: (a) other analysis of the plan considering the latest input given and another look at the obstacles that could hamper this change, (b) the setting up of the mechanics of the change including support needed by administration and council members, and (c) the initial move towards implementing the new procedures.

The following are some of the issues to be considered as the above steps are implemented. First, time must be taken to look at the various obstacles that could reduce the effectiveness of this undertaking. The roles of the councils have to be clearly set and must be acceptable to the various stakeholder groups. Second, once the parameters for the school council have been set, training and support for both principals and council members has to be provided. Third the implementation should be staggered. Councils whose role includes involvement in setting policies and the budgetary process, may have to limit their involvement in other areas.

Phase III

This is the phase that Fullan (1991) refers to as "Phase III -called continuation, incorporation, routinization, or institutionalization-refers to whether the change gets built in as part of the ongoing system..." (p. 48). The activities planned for this phase need to continue to support the ongoing change. The need to keep open the lines of communications is more important than ever. This is the crucial stage. Roles that are to be played by school councils need to have some continuity to them. They must be set at a level which parent interest and participation can sustain over a long period of time. Also the progress and needs of the councils must be monitored and assistance provided to help them increase their effectiveness.

Summary

In summary there are some critical considerations which must be met in any initiatives taken in the area of school councils and their roles. These are as follows:

1. All stakeholder groups must be involved in the decisions made.
2. The roles set for school councils must be meaningful.
3. The level of parent commitment must be set at a level that can be sustained over a reasonable period of time to avoid a high turn over rate of council members.
4. Support must be planned and implemented for administrators and council members.
5. Open lines for two-way communications between all stakeholder groups must be established and maintained.
6. Improving the quality of education for our children must be a priority throughout this entire process.

7. Depending on the role set for a school councils, other commitments for the council may have to be modified at the start.
8. The various interest groups have to be encouraged to take ownership of both the process and its results.
9. The process has to be flexible enough to allow for adjustments as they are needed.
10. The mandate of each council has to be clearly set out.
11. The process of implementing school councils that play a more meaningful role can not be rushed.

With the various interest groups taking ownership over the process and its results, a new collaborative approach could develop which could have benefits for education in Sturgeon. Fullan (1991) talks about this when he writes, "Alliances provide greater power, both of ideas and of the ability to act on them" (p. 349).

References

- Alberta Education. (1991). A study of the impact of the school councils section in the 1988 school act.
- Alberta Education. (1993a). Achieving the vision, 1992 report. The Crown in Right of Alberta.
- Alberta Education. (1993b). Meeting the challenge-an education roundtable workbook.
- Alberta Education. (1994). Response guide for use in the roles and responsibilities education consultation process.
- Ayers, W. (1991). "Peretroika" in Chicago schools. Educational Leadership, 48, 69-71.
- Bacchus, M., & Marchiafava, B. (1991, April). Implementing school reform in Chicago: The system perspective. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Bailey, W.J. (1991). School-site management applied. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Company, Inc.
- Barth, R.S. (1990). Improving schools from within. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bennet, A.E., Bryk, A.S., Easton, J.Q., Kerbow, D., Lupescu, S., & Sebring, P.A. (1992). Charting reform: The principals' perspective. Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, Chicago.

- Bezeau, L.M. (1989). Educational administration for Canadian teachers. Copp Clark Pitman Ltd.
- Brown, W.J. (1981). Educational finance in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Teachers' Federation.
- Brown, D.J. (1990). Decentralization and school-based management. Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Chapman, J.L., & Boyd, W.L. (1986). Decentralization, devolution, and the school principal: Australian lessons on statewide educational reform. Educational Administration Quarterly, 22(4), 28-58.
- Clinchy, E. (1989, May). Chicago's great experiment begins: Will radical decentralization bring school reform? Equity and Choice, 5(3), 40-43.
- Directors' General, Australian States and Territories and New Zealand. (1992, April). Devolution and accountability project report. A report prepared for the Conference of The Directors' General, April 1992.
- Dlugosh, L.L. (1993, February). Planning makes perfect. Executive Educator, 15, 63-64.
- Easton, J.Q., Flinspach, S.L., O'Connor, C., Paul, M., Qualls, J., & Ryan, S.P. (1993, March). Local school governance: The third year of Chicago school reform. Chicago, IL: Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

- Ford, D.J. (1992, April). Chicago principals under school based management: New roles and realities of the job. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 353 632).
- Foster, K. (1984). Parent advisory councils : School partners or handy puppets? Principal, 63, 26-31.
- Fullan, M.G. (1991). The new meaning of educational change. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gamage, D.T. (1993). A review of community participation in school governance: An emerging culture in Australian education. British Journal of Educational Studies, XXXXI(2), 134-149.
- Gamage, D.T. (1994). A chapter in school governance: Retrospect and perspective. Unpublished manuscript. University of Newcastle, Australia.
- Gamage, D.T., & Bell, A.B. (1992). The establishment of school councils in the hunter region: Problems and issues. A paper presented at the Staff and Student Seminar Series of the Faculty of Education, University of Newcastle, Shortland, May.
- Glass, T.E. (1991). Chicago school reform: Only the first step. School Community Journal, 1, 39-42.
- Handy, C.B. (1985). Understanding organizations. (3rd ed.) Markham, ON: Penguin Books Canada Ltd.

- Hansen, B.J., & Marburger, C.L. (1989). School based management: A manual for training school councils. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Hess, G.A. JR. (1993). Decentralization and community control. In S.L. Jacobson, & R. Berne (Ed.) Reforming education: The emerging systemic approach, (pp.66-86). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, INC.
- Hess, G.A., & Easton, J.Q. (1991, April). Who's making what decisions: Monitoring shifts in Chicago school reform. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Hewitson, M. (1992, July). Deciding about decision making. Paper presented to the National Conference of the Australian Council for Educational Administration, Darwin: Northern Territory.
- Johnson, B. K. (1993). School councils' perspective on their roles and participation in decision-making. Unpublished master's project. University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.
- Lange, J.T. (1993, January). Site-based, shared decision making: A resource for restructuring. National Association of Secondary School Principals, pp. 98-107.
- Legislative Assembly of the Territories. (1901). The school ordinance of 1901.
- Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta. (1922). The school act of 1922.

Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta. (1931). The school act of 1931.

Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta. (1952). The school act of 1952.

Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta. (1980). The school act of 1980.

Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta. (1988). The school act of 1988.

Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta. (1994).
Bill 19: School amendment act, 1994.

Lyons, P., Robbins, A., & Smith, A. (1982) Involving parents: A handbook for participation in schools.
Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Marburger, c. (1978). Who controls the schools. National
Committee for Citizens in Education

Marsh, C. (1988). Spotlight on school improvement. Allan &
Unwin Australia Pty Ltd.

Morris, R. (ED.). (1990). Central and local control of education after the education reform act 1988. London:
The British Educational Management and Administration
Society.

Neal, R.G. (1991). School based management: Detailed guide for successful implementation. Bloomington, IN:
National Education Service>

Seely, D.S. (1985). Education through partnership.
Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for
Public Policy Research.

Schofield, D. (1975). School leadership digest-community
involvement in educational governance. National
Association of Elementary Principals.

Appendix A

Interview Schedule

Introduction

I would like to tape this interview to help me reduce some possible sources of error in my data collection. Being able to replay this interview will help me to better determine the content of your responses. This tape will be identified by a code known only to myself. Your name will not appear on the tape of this interview, on the transcript of this interview, or in the written report on this study. These tapes will be considered private and only the transcriber and myself will listen to them before they are erased. Once the transcribing is completed, I would appreciate it if you would read the transcript of your interview to verify its accuracy. At this time I will ask you if you feel comfortable with me using this information in my study.

After hearing my plans for this project and my procedures to protect anonymity and confidentiality, are you willing to participate in this study by allowing me to interview you?

Interview Questions

1. What functions does your school council serve?
- T1. How often does your school council meet?
2. Were there problems encountered by your group in forming or maintaining your school council and if so how were they resolved?
3. What factors helped or enabled your school council to operate in an effective manner?
- T2. How many members does your council have?
- 4.. What do you perceive as the future role for school councils?
5. What conditions must exist for a school council to be able to fulfil the role that you perceive for it?

6. What do you perceive as potential areas of concern that could arise if school councils play the role which you perceive for them?

7. What do you perceive as possible benefits of school councils to:

- (a) schools
- (b) the community
- (c) students
- (d) parents
- (e) school staff
- (f) school boards

T3. How long has your school council been in operation?

8. Do you foresee potential problems if the government changes the role of school councils and if so what are they?

9. What skills are important for a person to possess to be an effective school council member?

10. What resources need to be made available to school council members so that they can play an effective role?

11. What should the composition of the school council be?

12. Are there any other considerations which need to be taken care of for school councils to be effective?

13. Do you have any concerns about the formation of school councils in your area?

Conclusion

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and for your cooperation in this interview. Once the data from this survey is compiled, I will be glad to share the results with you. What arrangements can we make to facilitate the exchange of this information?

Appendix B
Interview Schedule

Introduction

I would like to tape this interview to help me reduce some possible sources of error in my data collection. Being able to replay this interview will help me to better determine the content of your responses. This tape will be identified by a code known only to myself. Your name will not appear on the tape of this interview, on the transcript of this interview, or in the written report on this study. These tapes will be considered private and only the transcriber and myself will listen to them before they are erased. Once the transcribing is completed, I would appreciate it if you would read the transcript of your interview to verify its accuracy. At this time I will ask you if you feel comfortable with me using this information in my study.

After hearing my plans for this project and my procedures to protect anonymity and confidentiality, are you willing to participate in this study by allowing me to interview you?

Interview Questions

A. Present School Council

1. What functions does your school council currently serve?
2. How often does your school council meet?
3. Were there problems encountered by your group in forming your current school council and if so how were they resolved?
4. Were there problems encountered by your group in maintaining your school council and if so how were they resolved?

5. What factors helped or enabled your school council to operate in an effective manner?
6. How many members does your council have?
7. What resources were available to help your school council to be as effective as possible?
8. What were the benefits of having your school council operate to:
 - a) the students
 - b) your local school
 - c) the community
 - d) the parents
 - e) the school staff
 - f) the school board
9. What is the composition of your present school council?

B. What Your School Council Might Be

1. What do you perceive as the future role for school councils?
2. What conditions must exist for a school council to be able to fulfil the role that you perceive for it?
3. What do you perceive as potential areas of concern that could arise if school councils play the role which you perceive for them?
4. What do you perceive as possible benefits of school councils to:
 - (a) schools

- (b) the community
- (c) students
- (d) parents
- (e) school staff
- (f) school boards

5. What skills are important for a person to possess to be an effective school council member?

6.. What resources need to be made available to school council members so that they can play an effective role?

7. What should the composition of the school council be?

8. Are there any other considerations which need to be taken care of for school councils to be effective?

9. Do you have any concerns about the future role of school councils in your area?

10. Who should have the responsibility of setting the role that a school council should have?

Conclusion

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and for your cooperation in this interview. Once the data from this survey is compiled, I will be glad to share the results with you. What arrangements can we make to facilitate the exchange of this information?

Appendix C

STURGEON SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 24

POLICY HANDBOOK

C/3

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

The Board has adopted a policy to encourage Principals to form School Advisory Councils in their school attendance areas and to give recognition to those councils which have already been formed.

SCHOOL COUNCILS

1.0 POLICY

- 1.1 The Board of Trustees believes that School Councils provide valuable advisory assistance to the school principal and to the Board.
- 1.2 The Board of Trustees supports the establishment of School Councils in a manner consistent with the School Act and the conditions outlined as part of this policy.

2.0 GUIDELINES

- 2.1 The School Council meetings shall provide an opportunity for members to learn about their school and to be given ample opportunity to participate in discussion of issues at the school level.
- 2.2 The majority of the voting members of the Council must be parents of students attending that school.
- 2.3 School Councils may act in an advisory capacity to the school principal and to the Board.
- 2.4 The Board of Trustees may delegate items to the School Council, request representatives to sit on Board committees, and request input on various issues that the Board is discussing at any given point in time.

3.0 PROCEDURES

Rules for Establishment of School Councils

- 3.1 A general parent meeting shall be called by the principal prior to January 1, 1990 for the purpose of determining if the parents wish to establish a school council. If the majority of the parents of students of the school at the meeting wish to establish a School Council, the principal shall chair the organizational meeting. The meeting agenda will include the election of parents to the Council Executive, a review of School Council purposes and Board policies and regulations relating to School Councils.

- 1 -

STURGEON SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 24

POLICY HANDBOOK

C/3

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

3.2 It shall be the responsibility of the School Council to establish by-laws in accordance with this policy and the School Act by which to conduct the affairs of the School Council.

3.3 The principal shall be an ex-officio member of the School Council.

Rules for Continuance of School Councils

3.4 A general organizational meeting shall be called annually by the principal in accordance with the by-laws of the School Council. The meeting agenda will include the election of parents to the Council Executive, a review of School Council purposes and Board policies and regulations relating to School Councils.

School Council Reports

3.5 Pursuant to the School Act Section 17(3) -

"A school council may

- (a) advise the principal of the school and the board respecting any matter relating to the school, and
- (b) perform any duty or function delegated to it by the board in accordance with the delegation."

3.6 The Board shall refer the School Council's report to the Superintendent for his consideration and recommendation to Board.

Dissolution of School Councils

3.7 The principal shall arrange for a general meeting to dissolve a School Council if a minimum of five percent of the parents of students attending the school request such a meeting.

3.8 The Superintendent or his designate shall chair the meeting to consider dissolving the school council.

3.9 The School Council shall dissolve immediately in any school year if the majority of parents who attend the parent meeting wish to terminate the operation of the School Council.

3.10 In the event that the School Council is dissolved, the principal shall invoke 3.1 of this policy in September of the next school year.

- 2 -

STURGEON SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 24**POLICY HANDBOOK****SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS**

C/3

ECS LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES (ECS-LAC)

These Committees are established in the agreement between the Board and the Minister of Education for each approved Early Childhood Services Program. Their function is to advise the Principal with regard to the Early Childhood Services Program at his school. The Principal and ECS teacher are "ex-officio" members and willing service personnel such as school nurses, etc. may also be members. However, representative parents of children registered in the program should constitute the majority of the Committee. The Committee selects its own Chairman and reports directly to the Principal, and through him to the ECS Co-ordinator for the school system.

Approved - June 7, 1989.

Revised - May 16, 1990.